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SECONDARY SOCIAL STUDIES TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS
OF SPECIAL EDUCATION

by

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A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty

of the

University of North Dakota

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

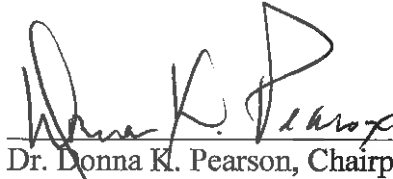
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Grand Forks, North Dakota


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2015

This dissertation, submitted by Kelli Ann Odden in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Education from the University of North Dakota, has been read by the Faculty Advisory Committee under whom the work has been done and is hereby approved.

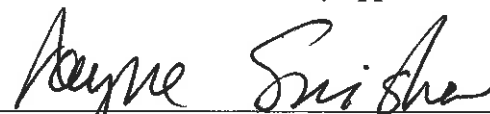

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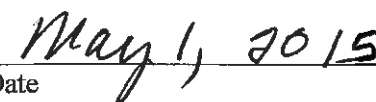

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Dean of the School of Graduate Studies


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PERMISSION

Title Secondary Social Studies Teachers' Perceptions of Special Education
Department Teaching and Learning
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Kelli Odden
April 29, 2015

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ABSTRACT

Through educational reform and federal mandates, general and special education teachers' responsibilities are designed to intersect. Focusing on secondary social studies teachers, the purpose of this qualitative study was to understand the teachers' perceptions of special education and how this influences the implementation of special education services in the classroom. From data collected through interviews and analyzed through Moustakas' phenomenological design, two textural themes emerged (expertise and communication) in addition to three structural themes (placement, Individual Education Plan (IEP)-Reader's Digest Version, and time). Findings indicate that social studies teachers appreciated the role of special education, but their perception was focused on their content specialization. The secondary social studies teachers valued collaboration, but it was the responsibility of the special education teacher to teach their student. Recommendations include the need for additional special education coursework in pre-service teacher education and the dedication of scheduled communication amongst secondary educators to enhance collaboration between departments.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Throughout the history of education, philosophies, rights, and regulations have framed a continuous debate regarding the roles and responsibilities of educators in the classroom. As a result of changing laws, educators have continually evolved in an effort to conform. The factors have increased the responsibilities of all educators, specifically for general and special educators. These pressures and changes placed upon general educators aid in shaping perceptions about special education. This study interrogates the secondary social studies teachers' perceptions of special education. The focus of this chapter describes the background and changes in education, purpose and significance of the study, research questions, definition of terms, and organization of the study.

Special Education

Not until the last half century has there been consideration for “equal access” to educational opportunities. Section 504 (Civil Rights law) shaped the aims of the disabilities movement to educate all and weakened discrimination towards individuals with a disability. A recent example of the continued effort in fighting discrimination was the passing of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) in 1990. The ADA mandates protections against discrimination for individuals with a disability in both the public and private sector. Written into ADA is employment, public service, public accommodations, and services operated by private entities, telecommunications, and miscellaneous

provisions. As well, the implementation of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) has put increased accountability on the teachers and schools to ensure a proper education for all students. “Taken together, IDEA, Section 504, and ADA ensure that people who have disabilities have the right to fully access throughout their lives all the programs, services, and activities available to other individuals” (Friend, 2011, p. 17). Assisting all individuals, the laws required equal access to education, employment opportunities, for both public and private services. Continued revisions have affected education.

Further supporting the intentions for an appropriate education for all students, in 1990, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act was renamed Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). The IDEA “specified that all children—including those with disabilities formerly excluded from school—were entitled to a free, appropriate public education” (Mastropieri & Scruggs, 2014, p. 3). While IDEA was the most critical in making changes to public education for students with a disability, this legislation also placed additional requirements on general education teachers. General education teachers would now need to collaborate with special education teachers, implement modifications, and prepare themselves for inclusive classroom environments. The most prominently defined requirement for the general education teacher was becoming part of a core Individual Education Plan (IEP) team and working with the special education teacher and other specialists (Yell, 2012). Additional changes in 2004 occurred when George W. Bush reauthorized IDEA raising the accountability levels for all schools and educators and requiring that all students with disabilities attain the same educational standards as their typical developing peers. The IDEA law forced schools to not only look at their

accountability level for students on an IEP, but also examine the classroom environments in which they would be educated.

Special Education and Inclusion

The term “inclusion” elicits many differing opinions and disagreements in the field of general and special education. Educators have taken a broad array of stances about inclusion from a movement of social justice, opposition, to toleration. The mandating of a Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) has evolved into a position for inclusion and created controversies amongst educators, administrators, and parents (Turnbull, Turnbull, Erwin, Soodak, & Shogren, 2015).

Part of the argument about inclusion relates to what it means to place a student diagnosed with a learning disability in general education classrooms and integrating their learning experiences with their peers (Turnbull et al., 2015). General educators often question what implications inclusion will have on their classroom and teaching. The perception that the term inclusion is meant only for students in special education is one of the many barriers. Friend (2011) reminds educators that “**inclusion** is a belief system shared by every member of a school as a learning community...about the responsibility of educating all students so that they reach their [full] potential” (p. 21).

Simply placing an individual with a disability in the general education classroom does not create an inclusive environment (Anderson, 2006). This mentality is further highlighted by Mara Sapon-Shevin (2007), as noted in an interview conducted with a student. “I was only partly included. My body was there, but so was the class gerbil” (p. 144). Sapon-Shevin (2007) describes inclusion as a way of “structuring our classrooms so that typical hierarchies of ‘smartness’ are broken down and replaced with

an understanding that there are many ways to be smart” (p. 15). Looking at inclusion as a matter of social justice, Sapon-Shevin (2003) states, “Inclusive classrooms can teach us important lessons that go far beyond individual students and specific settings and help us create the inclusive, democratic society that we envision for our students and society” (p. 26). Consequently, this philosophy intimidates educators and causes frustrations in understanding how to guide and educate all abilities. Further, there are implementation dilemmas related to practical matters and pressures that exist in schools, such as time for shared planning, adequate and consistent personnel, and pressures associated to high stakes testing (Friend & Bursuck, 2009).

Implications for Teachers

Throughout the Civil Rights movement, the voice of the lawmaker and parents of individuals with a disability has been heard. However, the educators who have been expected to implement the rules and regulations of the IDEA have been hushed or not heard. Educators have had little say in the creation of laws and guidelines for educating students with all ability levels. Instead, they have been given the parameters of the law and told to follow the guidelines in the classroom. Educators are expected to employ inclusive methods and embrace inclusive philosophies. Of importance, schools that embrace inclusive educational practices are the most effective in combating discriminatory attitudes and creating welcoming environments for all students (Obiakor, Harris, Mutua, Rotatori, & Algozzine, 2012). Given the charge, this is a large feat for all educators.

Many of the struggles and controversies that have developed in school systems are a result of large national guidelines described in the federal legislation of IDEA and

No Child Left Behind (NCLB). “One of educators’ greatest complaints about No Child Left Behind is its emphasis on teaching to the test” (Trolan & Fouts, 2011, p. 4). In the NCLB act, teacher qualifications were spotlighted and great emphasis was placed upon standardized testing to show student improvement. Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) was forced into place, with little guidance on the plan for delivery to the students. The pressures of attaining AYP are put directly on educators’ shoulders. “With test scores being so volatile, school personnel are at a substantial risk of being punished or rewarded for results that are beyond their control” (Maleyko & Gawlik, 2011, p. 610). Furthermore, the IDEA called out educators’ teaching styles and curriculum, challenging their pedagogy. “Teachers should understand and be able to describe the research behind the interventions they use in their programs” (Yell, Shriner, & Katsiyannis, 2006, p. 11). Through each of the dynamic laws designed to create environments of progress for the students, the educators were challenged.

In curricular planning, educators were forced to look at their curriculums and align their goals and objectives with the needs of the students in the classroom through a process described as differentiated instruction. “In a differentiated classroom, the teacher assumes that different learners have differing needs” (Tomlinson, 2005, p. 3). The educator needed to be flexible in adjusting the curriculum rather than expecting students to modify themselves for the curriculum. Some of the frustration in implementing a differentiated instructive curriculum was how to accomplish this type of teaching. “Teachers who aren’t certain what learning should occur as a result of a lesson or unit frequently differentiate by letting students choose among loosely related activities”

(Dobbertin, 2012, p. 67). This method of instruction allows educators to create effective standards based instruction for students of all abilities in the classroom.

For students diagnosed with a disability and eligible to receive special education services, an IEP is developed by a team who identifies specific educational goals. The document guides the team's instruction of the specific student discussed in the IEP. Therefore, this framework outlines differentiating instruction to meet the need of the student and meet the legal obligations identified in the IEP. These philosophical shifts in educating students in an inclusive environment are a significant reason for this study. "Many general educators do not perceive themselves as adequately prepared to provide a meaningful education to students with diverse needs" (Jenkins, Pateman, & Black, 2002, p. 359). It is necessary to further examine how the general education and special education teachers address the educational needs of students.

Purpose of the Study

The intent of this study was to understand the secondary social studies teachers' perceptions of special education, how this influences the implementation of the IEP and other related special education services. Goepel (2009) states, "An IEP should record what is 'additional to' and 'different from' the teacher's regular differentiated planning" (p. 126). Is this how secondary social studies educators view the document, as something they need to explore and fully understand to properly educate the student? According to Yell (2012), "the IEP is a written commitment that the school will provide a student the special education and related services designed to meet the student's unique needs" (p. 238).

An important part of the collaboration between the secondary and special educator is to review the IEP in its entirety. The difficulty lies in that school districts may handle this process differently. Some school districts opt to give each student's teacher a copy of the entire IEP, while others provide only the accommodations and modifications (Johns & Crowley, 2007). It is important to understand that the goals are based on how the student's disability influences the student's involvement and progress in the general education curriculum and how the student's disability affects his or her educational performance (Friend & Bursuck, 2009). In consideration of the collaboration between special education and general education, the purpose of this qualitative study is to explore the attitudinal perceptions of secondary social studies teachers towards special education and if this affects the implementation of the Individual Education Plan and other related services. Keeping in mind the words of Merriam (2009),

the overall purposes of qualitative research are to achieve an *understanding* of how people make sense out of their lives, delineate the process (rather than the outcome or product) of the meaning-making, and describe how people interpret what they experience. (p. 14)

Employing interviews in this qualitative study, the researcher explored secondary social studies teachers' perceptions of special education to gain an understanding of each participant's experience.

Significance of the Study

A secondary social studies teacher's perception of special education is pertinent to the implementation of inclusion, teacher collaboration, teacher attitude, and application of the Individual Education Plan (Mastropieri & Scruggs, 2014). Each of these topics is

significant when focusing on the secondary social studies teacher's perceptions of special education. Researchers often focus upon inclusion, special education, teacher collaboration, and teacher attitude; however, there is little research examining the implementation of the Individual Education Plan, even less focusing on secondary teachers and their perceptions of special education (Angle & Moseley, 2009; Garvis, Twigg, & Pendergast, 2011; Gotshall & Stefanou, 2011; Idol, 2006).

A secondary social studies teacher's awareness of their role, responsibility, understanding, and ownership within special education is critical for students on an IEP (Friend & Bursuck, 2009). There is substantial research on the importance of collaboration between secondary and special education teachers, changes to the laws, and teacher preparation programs (Goepel, 2009; Grskovic & Trzcinka, 2011; Leyser, Zeiger, & Romi, 2011; Williams-Diehm, Brandes, Chesnut, & Haring, 2014). Given the lack of research surrounding secondary social studies education and special education, this study specifically examined the perceptions of the secondary social studies teacher towards special education.

Research Questions

This study focused on the secondary social studies teachers' perceptions of special education. The overarching question that guided this qualitative research study was, What is a secondary social studies teacher's perception of special education?

The overarching question was supported by the following sub-questions:

1. Does the secondary social studies teacher's educational background impact his or her perceptions of special education?
2. What are the secondary social studies teachers' perceptions of IEPs?

3. Do the secondary social studies teachers' perceptions impact IEP implementation? And, if so, how?
4. Do these perceptions impact the collaboration between secondary and special education teachers? And, if so, how?

Definitions of Terms

The following terms are used throughout this study. They are defined here to support the understanding of the content of this dissertation. They are as follows:

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA): This act is the major special education law, signed into law in 1975 and most recently revised in 2004. The most important provision in IDEA is that all children, from 3 through 21 years of age, regardless of type or severity of disability, are entitled to a free, appropriate public education (Mastropieri & Scruggs, 2014).

No Child Left Behind (NCLB): the reauthorized Elementary and Secondary Education Act, went into effect in 2001, holding schools accountable for the education of all students, including those with a disability (Mastropieri & Scruggs, 2014).

Inclusion: "Students with disabilities are served primarily in the general education classroom, under the responsibility of the general classroom teacher" (Mastropieri & Scruggs, 2014, p. 7).

Learner-Centered Classrooms: classrooms in which the needs of the learner are carefully considered before planning the course content (Tomlinson, 2014).

Collaboration: "two or more people working together to educate students with disabilities" (Turnbull, Turnbull, Wehmeyer, & Shogren, 2013, pp. 303-304).

Efficacy: one's beliefs in his or her capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action to achieve specific goals (Bandura, 1997).

Individual Education Plan (IEP): “a written plan for serving students with disabilities ages three through twenty-one” (Turnbull et al., 2013, p. 403).

Organization of the Study

This study is organized into five chapters. Chapter I introduces the study through a statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, research questions, significance of the study, and definition of terminology. Chapter II provides a review of the literature focusing on the following topics: historical perspective, Section 504, Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, No Child Left Behind, inclusion, changes in teacher responsibility, learner-centered classrooms, collaboration, efficacy, teacher education, social studies, and the Individual Education Plan. Chapter III identifies the methods employed and design of the study, as Chapter IV presents the findings and discussion of the qualitative study. To conclude, Chapter V presents the conclusions accompanied by recommendations.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Focusing upon secondary social studies teachers' perceptions of special education, this literature review includes an examination of historical events in special education, inclusion, shifts in teacher responsibility, teacher education, social studies, the link between special education and general education teachers, and the Individual Education Plan (IEP). These topics include a description of the teacher's efficacy and their teacher educational preparation. It is essential that teachers are provided training and support that would facilitate the acquisition of skills in order to provide services for children with different categories or types of disabilities (Cheatham, Hart, Malian, & McDonald, 2012). Within this literature review, the role and responsibilities of a social studies teacher are also discussed.

Historical Perspectives

Through changing educational laws and policies, general educators must now demonstrate mastery of his or her subject area *and* teach all ability levels in one classroom. With consideration for the term "general educators," throughout this research, secondary teachers will be used to distinguish between general education teachers and special education teachers. The terminology "secondary teachers" will be a representation of teachers in the secondary setting, grades 7-12, signifying various disciplines such as Mathematics, Science, English, Social Studies, and Physical Education. Each of these

areas of secondary education and teachers have been affected throughout the historical changes in special education.

Civil Rights Law Section 504

One of the key legislative actions regarding civil rights for individuals with a disability was Section 504 of the Vocational Rehabilitation Act of 1973. “[This] is a civil rights law that prevents discrimination against all individuals with disabilities in programs that receive federal funds, as do all public schools” (Friend & Bursuck, 2009, p. 10). This law ensures accessibility to all individuals. Section 504 stated,

No otherwise qualified handicapped individual in the United States...shall solely by reason of his handicap, be excluded from the participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subject to discrimination under any activity receiving federal financial assistance. (Yell, 2012, p. 52)

Section 504 mandated educational opportunities for people of all abilities. “For children of school age, Section 504 ensures equal opportunity for participation in the full range of school activities” (Friend & Bursuck, 2009, p. 10). As well as safeguarding an individual with a disability’s educational opportunities, Section 504 also covered many aspects of an individual’s life. The Civil Rights law covered the lifespan of the individual and safeguards their rights in many areas of life, including employment, public access to buildings, transportation, and education (Yell, 2012). Revisions to special education laws continued with the focus deviating from individuals with disabilities to inclusion or as members in a classroom. Accountability of the education of students with a diagnosed disability was beginning to take form.

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act

In 1990, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act was renamed Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). The IDEA law put into place six principles (Figure 1) that aided students' abilities to attain an appropriate education.

Zero Reject	A rule against excluding any student.
Nondiscriminatory Evaluation	A rule requiring schools to evaluate students fairly to determine if they have a disability and, if so, what kind and how extensive.
Appropriate Education	A rule requiring schools to provide individually tailored education for each student based on evaluation and augmented by related services and supplementary aids and services.
Least Restrictive Environment	A rule requiring schools to educate students with disabilities alongside students without disabilities to the maximum extent appropriate for the students with disabilities.
Procedural due process	A rule providing safeguards for students against schools' actions, including a right to sue schools in court.
Parental and student participation	A rule requiring schools to collaborate with parents and adolescent students in designing and carrying out special education programs.

Figure 1. Six Principles of IDEA. Turnbull, Ann; Turnbull, H. Rutherford; Wehmeyer, Michael L.; Shogren, Karrie A., *Exceptional Lives: Special Education in Today's Schools*, 7th Edition, © 2012. Reprinted by permission of Pearson Education, Inc., New York, New York.

Additional requirements in 1997 were added to the IDEA with the foremost significant changes made to the IEP. Prior to the 1997 amendments, "the IEP did not specify if the teacher on the core IEP team should be a student's general education or special education teacher" (Yell, 2012, p. 244). The IDEA's Amendment stated that both general and special education teachers have expert knowledge about the student's education (Mastropieri & Scruggs, 2014). This supported the intentions for an appropriate education for all students.

In 2004, President George W. Bush signed into law the most recent reauthorization of IDEA and gave it the title of Individuals with Disabilities Education

Improvement Act (IDEIA); however, this particular act continues to be referred to as IDEA in the literature. The amendments were created to “ensure that the Act meets the educational needs of students with disabilities” (Russo, Osborne, & Borreca, 2005, p. 111). Moreover, these recent amendments put into place increased accountability measures for school districts and their personnel. The implementation of the Individual with Disabilities Education Act has created strict parameters with which a student with disabilities will be educated (Yell, 2012).

The IDEA laid out specific rules and regulations that all schools must comply with in addressing the educational needs of students who qualify for special education services. “The IDEA is designed to provide a free appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment for all students with disabilities between the ages of three and 21” (Russo et al., 2005, p. 111). As stated in the IDEA mandate, the practice of inclusion ensured that a student is educated in the least restrictive environment.

Furthermore, in creating a shift from mainstreaming to inclusion, the amendments to IDEA required all students to be educated in the same environment. The secondary classroom is now viewed as the home base where every student starts his or her education, adding services as needed from that point. Additionally, the different expectations of the secondary and special education teachers changed the educational philosophies regarding teaching students who have a disability. Collaboration between general and special education teachers is a significant component of the reauthorization of IDEIA (Friend, 2011). Another fundamental point of the importance of a relationship between secondary and special education teachers is the nurturing of inclusive environments, supportive of all students in the classroom. As discussed by Turnbull et al.

(2013), “inclusion through restructuring requires general and special educators to work in partnership with related service providers, families, and students to provide supplementary aids and services and special education and related services” (p. 39).

The reauthorization of IDEA in 2004 “builds on...[No Child Left Behind] by emphasizing increased accountability for student performance at the classroom, school, and school district levels” (Yell, 2012, p. 58). The reauthorization emphasized high expectations for students with disabilities and ensured their access to the general education classroom and curriculum, to the maximum extent possible (Conderman & Johnston-Rodriguez, 2009). This has forced schools to investigate ways to effectively connect instruction with measurement strategies that enable all students to demonstrate their learning (Halverson & Neary, 2009).

No Child Left Behind

No Child Left Behind (NCLB), signed into law in 2002, changed how education would be viewed for all students, including those with a disability. Some of the purposes of NCLB legislation were, as stated by Brigham, Scruggs, and Mastropieri (2011),

the alignment of No Child Left Behind with IDEA brings students with all kinds of disabilities to general education curriculum standards and promotes accountability for teachers and schools to ensure that large numbers of students with disabilities attain levels of proficiency that is similar to their peers without disabilities. (p. 223)

Some expectations that affected the education of students with a disability were that all children would achieve grade level in reading and math by the 2013-2104 school year (Friend, 2011; Friend & Bursuck, 2009). In describing the assessment mandates, Yell

(2012) suggested that “Congress and President Bush believed that to ensure that instruction and achievement for students with disabilities would be improved, and students with disabilities would not be left behind, they had to be included in NCLB’s accountability requirements” (p. 57). Students with and without disabilities will be accounted for in all school wide exams. As a result, NCLB has forced school districts and educators to look at education differently and has shifted the roles of teachers in the general education classroom. As stated by Davis, Dieker, Pearl, and Kirkpatrick (2012),

if students with disabilities are to be included in the general education setting and held accountable for mastering state standards, then the bottom line for practice is that general educators and special educators must work in partnership in all aspects of instruction to serve all students. (p. 209)

The special education teacher and secondary education teacher are no longer seen as separate entities in a school, rather playing a collaborative role to support the needs of students and support the inclusive environment (Friend, 2011; Friend & Bursuck, 2009). As described by Mastropieri and Scruggs (2014), “relationships develop among the many individuals working together to design optimal educational programs for students with disabilities” (p. 42). Collaboration amongst educators is necessary for effective inclusive environments (Dettmer, Knackendoffel, & Thurston, 2013). “Inclusion, then, refers to the participation of students with disabilities alongside their nondisabled peers in academic, extracurricular, and other school activities” (Turnbull et al., 2013, p. 38). The mandate that all students will be given a free, appropriate public education has required an inclusive model in schools.

Inclusion

What is inclusion? Johns and Crowley (2007) defined inclusion as “students with and without disabilities receiving their education side by side with their nondisabled peers in [the] general education classrooms” (p. 1:2). Important to and underlying inclusion is collaboration, which sought to address attitudes that may focus on perceived problems instead of the most effective education for the student with special needs.

Earlier, Winn and Blanton (2005) emphasized,

[T]he movement toward inclusive schools and classrooms is...[also] a response to concerns that have been raised by special and general educators alike about the value and effectiveness of practices associated with separate special education and traditional remedial programs, as well as a response to concerns about the ways in which students who are struggling are viewed. (p. 4)

The concept behind inclusion was not for teachers to work as islands and muddle through on their own, but rather demonstrate collaboration among and between secondary and special education teachers for inclusion to be successful.

Mainstreaming was based on the premise that all students will be placed in a separate location from their peers until they have proved themselves capable of an education equivalent to their peers (Mastropieri & Scruggs, 2014). Over the past two decades, the entire structure and philosophy of special education has shifted with the changing of special education laws. Inclusion was considered the best way to serve students in the least restrictive environment. More recently, the definition of inclusion, according to Friend and Bursuck (2009), “is founded on the belief or philosophy that students with disabilities should be fully integrated into their school learning

communities, usually in general education classrooms, and that their instruction should be based on their abilities, not their disabilities” (p. 5). The practice of inclusion and how it is defined has transformed throughout history. Figure 2 demonstrates the four phases of inclusion and the changes.

Mainstreaming	An educational arrangement of returning students from special education classrooms to general education classrooms, typically for nonacademic portions of the school day such as art, music, and physical education.
Regular Education Initiative	An attempt to reform general and special education by creating a unified system capable of meeting individual needs in general education classrooms.
Inclusion through accommodations (Instructional adaptations)	An additive approach to inclusion that assumes the only viable approach to including students with disabilities in general education classrooms is to add instructional adaptations to the predefined general education teacher and learning approaches.
Inclusion through restructuring	A design to inclusion that re-creates general and special education by merging resources to develop more flexible learning environments for all students and educators.

Figure 2. Phases of Inclusion. Turnbull, Ann; Turnbull, H. Rutherford; Wehmeyer, Michael L.; Shogren, Karrie A., *Exceptional Lives: Special Education in Today's Schools*, 7th Edition © 2012. Reprinted by permission of Pearson Education, Inc., New York, New York.

The shift to inclusion has created larger percentages of individuals with a disability in the general education classroom. “Responding to the federal initiative to educate more students with disabilities in the least restrictive environment, many states have seen percentages of those students in general education rise dramatically” (Grskovic & Trzcinka, 2011, p. 94). These changes have forced a shift in thinking about teaching in the secondary classroom. “Teachers should continually ask, ‘What does *this* student need at *this*...[point] in order to be able to progress with *this* key content, and what do I need to do to make that happen?’” (Tomlinson & Imbeau, 2010, p. 14).

Changes in Teacher Responsibility

Inclusive environments are the shared responsibility of both the special education and secondary social studies teacher. Halverson and Neary (2009) noted, “In the past, the success of students with intensive special needs was the responsibility of special education staff in traditionally separate programs” (p. 10). Even when students were later mainstreamed, it was still the responsibility of the special education teacher to ensure the student’s education was meeting educational goals and objectives (Mastropieri & Scruggs, 2014). Through changes to special education law, there has been a shift in roles of the general and special educator in the inclusive classroom. According to Brownell, Adams, Sindelar, Waldron, and Vanhover (2006), “teachers learning and working together to achieve common goals is considered by many scholars to be a central element of major school reform efforts, including those aimed at improving the inclusion of students with disabilities in general education settings” (p. 169). Depending on the structure of the school district, the teacher roles can look different. “The role of special educators has changed dramatically, with a shift from direct provider of instruction to facilitator and consultant” (Turner, 2003, p. 491). The general and special education teachers have had to evolve from being separate teaching entities in a school to collaborating with one another on a continual basis. The teacher relationship may reflect co-teaching models or a time to ask questions of one another to define the best learning experiences for students (Mastropieri & Scruggs, 2014).

While No Child Left Behind (NCLB) insisted that all students will be successful no matter their ability, this language put substantial responsibility and accountability on secondary teachers to ensure the success of all students. King (2003) contended, “With

the push for placing special needs students in inclusion classrooms, it is reasonable to assume a need to understand contextually relevant teacher practices that benefit a diverse population of students” (p. 151). Co-teaching and collaboration at the secondary level presented some unique challenges, because of such factors as increased emphasis on content knowledge, the pace of instruction, scheduling constraints, high stakes testing, and minimal special education staff (Mastropieri & Scruggs, 2014). Despite the possible struggles of co-teaching at the secondary level, research supports teaching being learner centered (Tomlinson, 2014). Tomlinson (2014) defined learner-centered teaching as a collaborative effort between teachers and students: “Together, teacher and students plan, set goals, monitor progress, analyze successes and failures, and seek to multiply successes and learn from failures” (p. 21).

Learner-Centered Classrooms

In a learner-centered classroom, the goal is to produce educational accountability at the level of the learner. According to King (2003), the “focus on learner outcomes requires teachers to vary instruction, curriculum, and assessment practices to meet the range of developmental and educational needs present in today’s classrooms” (p. 152). When creating a learner-centered classroom, secondary social studies teachers and special education teachers are looking at the curriculum and assessment practices from differing points of view. Dettmer et al. (2013) suggested,

[G]eneral educators are in the best position to determine the big ideas that all students need to learn in their content area or grade level, and special educators can help determine if those goals are appropriate for individual students and suggest alternatives when necessary. (p. 278)

This supports the need for consistent collaboration between special and secondary social studies teachers when meeting the differentiated needs of the learners. Furthermore, each educator has an area of expertise to bring into classroom planning and instruction. Through collaborative planning, the students' needs are met through a learner-centered curriculum.

In a quantitative study, Grskovic and Trzcinka (2011) examined secondary content teachers' understanding (i.e., knowledge, skills, and dispositions) of the essential standards to effectively teach students with mild disabilities. Employing an 80-item survey based upon Council for Exceptional Children's Individualized General Curriculum Standards, participants were asked to rate the importance of each standard for general education secondary teacher preparation. From the 31 standards, eight constructs were created: legal and theoretical foundations, development and learning characteristics, instructional strategies, classroom management, language, assessment, professional and ethical practice, and collaboration. Results indicated that instructional strategies was the highest rated standard with classroom management as a second. They recommended that new teachers still need more pedagogical training to teach all students. Further, Grskovic and Trzcinka (2011) contend, "All secondary teachers should now have the expectation that they will be teaching diverse learners in their classrooms, including students with disabilities" (p. 95).

Learner-centered curriculum is also referred to as differentiated instruction; learning experiences are most effective when they are engaging, relevant, and interesting to the student (Tomlinson & Imbeau, 2010). As stated by Tomlinson (2005),

differentiation...[does not] suggest that a teacher can be all things to all individuals all the time. It does, however, mandate that a teacher create a reasonable range of approaches to learning much of the time, so that most students find learning a fit much of the time. (p. 17)

The secondary teacher is responsible for having a clear understanding of the abilities of all students. “Then they ask what it will take to modify that curriculum and instruction so that each learner comes away with knowledge, understanding, and skills necessary to take on the next important phase of learning” (Tomlinson, 2014, p. 4).

High school secondary teachers are now more likely than special education teachers to be the principal providers of instruction for students with disabilities and to teach to the differentiated needs of all students. In the report, *Special Education in America*, Swanson (2008) reported that roughly 80% of the high school students with disabilities were in general education classes most of the day. It is anticipated that, with time, the percentages are expected to rise and general education teachers need to be prepared to handle the various types of learners in their classroom (King, 2003).

Federal legislation and policy changes require students on an IEP to be held to high expectations and assure access to the same general education curriculum as students without disabilities (Dettmer et al., 2013). Special education teachers and secondary social studies teachers are both a part of the school context and part of the contribution to how successful or unsuccessful school practices will be (Winn & Blanton, 2005). A portion of school achievement or breakdown relies on collaboration between educators.

Collaboration

“As the number of students who are struggling in schools grows, the need for general and special education to come together to create the vision and capacity to educate all students becomes more and more pronounced” (Winn & Blanton, 2005, p. 1). Collaboration is emphasized in the IDEA and current literature suggests that there is a strong emphasis on the dependence of the special education teacher by the secondary teacher (Carpenter & Dyal, 2007; Goepel, 2009; Johns & Crowley, 2007; King, 2003; Washburn-Moses, 2006). Currently, both types of teachers are educated very differently and apart from one another. Teacher education programs support the notion that special education and general education are two separate entities. They are educated in two completely different majors (Winn & Blanton, 2005). “Secondary special education teachers are qualified to...provide remediation, address behavioral issues, and seek accommodations and modifications for students with disabilities” (Grskovic & Trzcinka, 2011, p. 95). However, the content instruction is not the special education teacher’s strong suit. While the educational system is set up for both types of teachers to depend on one another (Carpenter & Dyal, 2007), contra wise the current approach supports the viewpoint that the secondary teacher is only responsible for the content, and not for teaching a student with a disability. According to Johns and Crowley (2007),

three guiding principles that general and special educators use to work together are mutual respect for one another’s unique knowledge and skills; the willingness to ask questions and seek knowledge from professional peers; and the willingness to share information and data generated from observations in the classroom.

(p. 8:1)

Teachers must be willing to work with one another. These principles serve as a foundation for collaboration, consultation, and co-teaching between the secondary social studies teacher and special education teacher.

Generating collaborative time between general and special education teachers can be difficult, especially with differences in areas of expertise. “A potential problem with collaboration between secondary special educators and content area specialists, however, is a lack of crossover of the content knowledge and pedagogical skills between general and special educators” (McDuffie, Mastropieri, & Scruggs, 2009, p. 494). Teacher education programs need to further the philosophy of teamwork. As pre-service teachers complete coursework and field experiences advancing to employment and in-service teachers move into special/general education roles and responsibilities, professional development should include the major components of teamwork (Brownell et al., 2006).

As well as teamwork, co-teaching is another critical component associated with special education. As prominent research scientists in the field of special education, Mastropieri and Scruggs (2014) support increasing the inclusion of students with disabilities in the classrooms. Further, Mastropieri and Scruggs (2014) suggest that “co-teaching usually consists of one general education teacher paired with one special education teacher in an inclusive classroom of general education and special education students” (p. 43). Co-teaching can take on various models. Several examples include one teach and one observe, each teach a small group at a station, parallel teach in two small groups, alternative teaching, teaming, and one teach and one assist. In the literature, the model that is most often focused upon is the one teach and one assist model (Bouck, 2007; Brownell et al., 2006; Friend & Bursuck, 2009).

In a qualitative research study by Bouck (2007), the researcher investigated the configuration of co-teaching collaboration between a general education and special education teacher in two eighth grade United States History classes. Focusing on the eighth grade teachers' perceptions of co-teaching, data were collected through interviews and classroom observations. Bouck (2007) found that "a majority of co-teaching...[consists] of general education teachers teaching the content and special education teachers serving as aides" (p. 46). Bouck (2007) also recommended that time to be set aside for communication between teachers to discuss the use of classroom space, possible tensions, and to be willing to share instruction.

The co-teaching model has been one way to conquer common teaching challenges. "Teachers are challenged to provide appropriate instruction for students who are working at many different levels and who are often from many different cultural and linguistic backgrounds" (Winn & Blanton, 2005, p. 2). Teachers need education, understanding, and practice in regards to their role in special education. If special education is to engage in any type of collaborative activity with general educators, the two fields will have to communicate about and understand the different conception each area holds about teaching and learning (Ashby, 2012).

[It is important to note that] general educators are not expected to know all there is to know about special education, but they are expected to be a part of professional teams that work together for solutions to the unique learning and behavior challenges some students present. (Johns & Crowley, 2007, p. 8:2)

The strength of the teaching collaboration also relies heavily on the efficacy of all teachers involved in the classroom (Bouck, 2007).

Teacher Efficacy

A secondary educator's role in collaboration with special education and conducting lesson modifications for students on an Individual Education Plan (IEP) is not necessarily understood. However, efficacy is key in building knowledge. "[T]eacher efficacy is not only teachers' judgments (or perceptions) about their own capabilities to successfully execute teaching practices, but also how this efficacy influences their own students' learning" (Chu, 2011, pp. 4-5). Teachers' overall attitude can affect student learning as well as the ability to collaborate with other professionals. Brownell et al. (2006) stated, "Individual teachers respond differently to collaborative professional learning opportunities and raise awareness that individual differences in teacher beliefs and knowledge may result in different learning outcomes" (pp. 170-171). A secondary teacher's attitude about his or her role in special education is pertinent when working with all students in the classroom (Pan, Chou, Hsu, Li, & Hu, 2013). Attitude has been defined over the past two decades by Bandura's theory of self-efficacy. Bandura (1997) defines self-efficacy as "one's capabilities to organize and execute the course of action required to produce given attainments" (p. 3). Bandura (1997) further states, "Beliefs influence the courses of action people choose to pursue, how much effort they put forth in given endeavors, how long they will persevere in the face of obstacles and failures" (p. 3).

The relationship between a teacher's self-efficacy towards special education, teacher collaboration, and the IEP is substantial in the educational success of the student. "If special educational needs are to be met, those responsible for meeting them must be willing to provide for these pupils" (Ellins & Porter, 2005, p. 188). A teacher's

self-efficacy plays a role in how they approach difficult circumstances in the classroom and their overall teaching ability. If a teacher has a high self-efficacy, they are a more effective teacher.

In a quantitative study, Pan et al. (2013) examined the relationship between teacher self-efficacy and teaching practices in the discipline of health and physical education. They surveyed 2,100 physical education teachers using the Teacher Self-Efficacy Scale for Health and Physical Education Teachers and the Teaching Practice Scale for Health and Physical Education Teachers questioning whether a teacher's self-efficacy affects teaching practices. Pan et al. (2013) concluded, "[Teacher self-efficacy]...is related to all four dimensions of teaching practice: teaching preparation, teaching content, teaching strategy, and teaching evaluation" (p. 248).

Consequently, a teacher may have different levels of perceived self-efficacy for content knowledge than for implementing a student's IEP, and understanding their role in teaching students who have disabilities (Kelm & McIntosh, 2012). According to Klassen, Tze, Betts, and Gordon (2011), "teacher efficacy—the confidence teachers hold about their individual and collective capability to influence student learning—is considered one of the key motivation beliefs influencing teachers' professional behaviors and student learning" (p. 21). Therefore, with the passing of IDEA and the movement towards inclusion, this has forced secondary and special education teachers to become more aware of one another's role in the education of a student diagnosed with a disability (Grskovic & Trzcinka, 2011). It is important to note that, with these educational shifts, classroom teachers are critical for successful inclusive classrooms and the education of all learners (Ellins & Porter, 2005).

Teacher Education

The subject of special education, the laws, and documents that accompany it are consistently referred to throughout the literature as topics that general educators feel ill-equipped to implement in the classroom (Carpenter & Dyal, 2007). “The purpose of the IEP is clearly stated as being a working document that conveys the strategies and interventions used to enable children with special educational needs to raise their achievement[s]” (Goepel, 2009, p. 127). While teacher preparation is a consistent debate in education, research supports secondary teachers’ feelings of being underprepared to be a part of the IEP team and often will take a passive role (Gordon, 2009).

Collaboration amongst teachers, parents, and students in the development of the IEP is key. “IEPs are designed to be developed by each student’s IEP team, which consists of teachers, parents, students and other professionals who work collaboratively to develop goals and supportive plans” (Williams-Diehm et al., 2014, p. 4). In a quantitative research study, Williams-Diehm et al. (2014) examined collaboration through a survey of 300 individuals. Using an educational listserv, the survey included demographics, years of experience, and educational levels of the participants; questions discussing roles of teachers, parents, and students in the development of the IEP document. According to Williams-Diehm et al. (2014), there was a lack of collaboration and communication between team members. This “holds the potential result of different disciplines unwittingly working on different goals and objectives and negating the needed connection for appropriate service chosen to address the student’s needs, thus, rendering the IEPs ineffective” (Williams-Diehm et al., 2014, p. 4). One recommendation from this research was that “it is imperative that teacher education programs and professional

development offerings purposefully address collaboration and participation concerns through specific curriculum, modeling, and mentoring” (Williams-Diehm et al., 2014, p. 9). A common understanding is considered fundamental to a supportive partnership and the writing of an effective IEP, to which all parties can give commitment (Russo et al., 2005). Understanding the IEP and its purposes is critical for effective teaching. “As a product, the IEP serves as a roadmap for teachers and parents to ascertain improvements in the child’s functioning within academic, social, and/or adaptive domains” (Lee-Tarver, 2006, p. 263).

All secondary teachers will be teaching diverse learners in their classrooms, including students with disabilities (Dettmer et al. 2013). “The standpoints of teachers for inclusion are affected positively by their education levels, their trainings related to special education, and the qualification of supportive service” (Gökdere, 2012, p. 2801). This puts an expectation on the university teacher preparation programs to prepare secondary teachers for this experience. “[I]f teachers are to be successful in the classrooms of the future, teacher preparation programs must provide training in the knowledge and skills necessary for working with children with a wide range of ability levels in the same classroom” (Jenkins et al., 2002, p. 359). University programs for secondary teachers must focus on the content of the major and the teaching strategies necessary to teach all ability students.

In a qualitative research study, “What’s Missing from Teacher Prep,” Chesley and Jordan (2012) conducted two formal focus groups with 60 general education teachers and examined their responsibilities as new teachers to the field. Chesley and Jordan (2012) reported,

Preparation for preservice teachers must focus on connecting their students' prior knowledge, life experiences, and interests to learning goals; locating and using a variety of instructional strategies to respond to students' diverse needs; building students' independence and group work skills; and especially, engaging students in solving real-world problems to make content more meaningful and exciting.

(p. 43)

The educators' understanding of their students' diverse needs is integral for a student's academic success.

In many universities, teacher preparation programs require one course for secondary education majors to understand inclusion and learning differences. Simmons, Carpenter, Dyal, Austin, and Shumack (2012) noted, "The state standards require that all general education candidates take only one course in special education" (p. 757). In a quantitative research project, Simmons et al. (2012) conducted a multiphase study concluding with a survey of recent graduates of a teaching college. They questioned their preparedness to work with individuals on an IEP, collaboration with special education teachers, and preparedness to collaboratively teach to promote inclusive best practices. Findings indicated that "confidence, collaboration, focus on secondary education teachers, and inclusive best practices all are ingredients needed for increased collaboration among special education faculty, secondary education faculty, and instructional leaders" (Simmons et al., 2012, p. 763). Through this research process, the university involved in this study revamped their secondary methods course. The secondary methods course taken by all secondary education majors added specific topics of study to the curriculum (e.g., Attention Deficit Disorder, learning strategies,

instructional strategies for teaching subject area content to students with disabilities, assistive technology, and co-teaching models within the secondary classroom) (Simmons et al., 2012). “Among those practices that most influence student success are attention to individual developmental differences, appreciation of student voice while setting appropriate challenges, directly teaching higher order thinking skills, and creating positive interpersonal relationships” (King, 2003, p. 151). An effective teacher needs to understand all ability levels and teacher preparation programs need to incorporate more knowledge and skills related to working with secondary students with disabilities (Simmons et al., 2012).

Reiterated throughout research, these requirements do not support what pre-service and in-service teachers are stating about their abilities or understandings of teaching students with disabilities. “Many general educators do not perceive themselves as adequately prepared to provide a meaningful education to students with diverse needs” (Jenkins et al., 2002, p. 359). Preparation and experience are pivotal in preparing pre-service and in-service teachers for all developmental levels (King, 2003).

In a quantitative research study, Leyser, Zeiger, and Romi (2011) surveyed 992 pre-service general and special education teachers from 11 different teacher education colleges about their attitudes towards teaching in inclusive environments. The study focused upon the amount of time spent in practicums, internships, and student teaching prior to graduating and how this played a role in a pre-service teacher’s comfort level in an inclusive environment. Leyser et al. (2011) concluded, “[W]ork experience with children and adolescents with...[special educational needs] as a component of preservice teacher preparation and experience in other contexts enhanced self-efficacy” (p. 252).

“As early as the 1970s, higher education professionals acknowledged the importance of preservice teachers’ active involvement in school classrooms early in their preparation programs” (Jenkins et al., 2002, p. 360). The power of practice and implementation of teaching strategies builds the secondary education teacher’s confidence in teaching all ability learners. “A growing body of...evidence indicates teacher quality to be the most important factor in predicting student achievement” (Angle & Moseley, 2009, p. 475). A teacher’s sense of self-efficacy plays a powerful role in student academic achievement and the educator’s overall ability to support learners with a disability. According to Tomlinson (2005),

they are a diverse group who can challenge the artistry of the most expert teacher in listening deeply, believing unconditionally, and moving beyond a recipe or blueprint approach to teaching to shape classrooms that offer many avenues and timetables to understanding. (p. 13)

Teacher preparation programs in most colleges and universities only require one course that infuses inclusive strategies for the secondary teacher.

Social Studies

The continued movement toward educating students with disabilities in inclusive settings mandates that teachers be prepared to work with all learners. As stated by Brown (2007), “to learn social studies effectively, students must gain a conceptual understanding of historical events, geographical places, and social positions as the content of textbook reading assignments” (p. 185). The educational focus for secondary social studies teachers is the content (Shuls & Ritter, 2013). Consequently, “instructional practices in content classes like social studies are geared toward the whole class with little or no

differentiated instruction to meet the needs of individual students struggling with the content” (Hughes & Parker-Katz, 2013, p. 94). Overall, there are many reports that state general educators feel their preparation seems inadequate to work with students who are struggling academically (Brigham et al., 2011; Carpenter & Dyal, 2007; Hughes & Parker-Katz, 2013).

There is substantial research regarding the implementation of inclusive environments surrounding core curriculums such as science, math, English; extracurricular courses like physical education and the arts (Angle & Moseley, 2009; Garvis et al., 2011; Hancock & Scherff, 2010; Pan et al., 2013). Angle and Moseley (2009) conducted a quantitative study concerning science teachers’ efficacy beliefs of secondary biology students who exceeded and/or struggled on the state exams. This study stemmed from the changing educational climate in the 21st century. “Raising educational expectations in America’s schools and sustaining successful reforms require the efforts of not only state education agencies and local school districts but also individual administrators and teachers” (Angle & Moseley, 2009, p. 473). Using the Teacher Attribute Questionnaire and the Science Teaching Efficacy Belief Instrument (STEBI), the researchers focused on the influence of teachers’ efficacy towards students’ abilities to understand biology and how this affects student achievement on state exams. Angle and Moseley (2009) found,

Data analysis yielded that the beliefs in the expectations that a biology teacher holds for his/her students to learn biology, regardless of student home environment, availability of classroom materials, or student motivation[s], was significantly related to high EOI Biology I test scores. (p. 481)

This study reiterated the importance of positive teacher self-efficacy when working with all students in the classroom.

In a 2011 quantitative study, Garvis et al. focused on sources of arts education self-efficacy information received by pre-service teachers during their university experience. Designed to elicit novice teachers' experiences with arts education, participants completed an online survey consisting of 10 questions. The participants discussed placements for practicums and student teaching experiences, which were formative in their attitudes and growth in their subject. Similar to Angle and Moseley (2009), it was concluded that a teacher's self-efficacy is critical in delivering a developmentally appropriate curriculum.

Specifically focusing upon social studies, there is little to no research found on the relationship between this subject and the perceptions of special education by secondary social studies teachers. The secondary social studies teacher has to ensure that all students are gaining knowledge from their courses. As stated by Scruggs, Mastropieri, and Okolo (2008), "perhaps more than other school subjects, social studies requires students to contemplate abstract concepts and principles that include economic systems, government, culture, civic roles, and responsibilities, geography, and change and continuity, to name a few" (p. 10). Social studies requires students to analyze topics such as history, sociology, geography, government, economics, and psychology that require abstract thinking and the ability to relate to foreign situations.

Students are not always able to think of the past in a different way than what the future looks like. Using a theory to practice approach, Scruggs et al. (2008) examined

science and social studies curriculum and instructional practices in relation to students with disabilities. Scruggs et al. (2008) suggest,

Teachers should keep in mind that social studies instruction presents considerable challenges to children and young adults. The challenges are even greater for student with disabilities, whose cognitive development and background knowledge are often more constrained than that of peers without disabilities.
(p. 10)

The placement of students with special needs in an inclusive social studies classroom is common across secondary education classrooms. “Our research, as well as that of others..., shows that general educators often lack knowledge of and experience in implementing instruction that benefits diverse learners in science and social studies” (Scruggs et al., 2008, p. 18).

These arguments frame the importance of the Individual Education Plan’s ability to support the secondary social studies teacher’s instructional accommodations for students on an IEP. “The purpose of the IEP is clearly stated as being a working document that conveys the strategies and interventions used to enable children with special educational needs to raise their achievement[s]” (Goepel, 2009, p. 127). The IEP is a critical resource for the secondary educator. Through collaboration with special education teachers, secondary social studies teachers in inclusive settings will create an educational environment that provides the individualized education essential to facilitate the students’ learning (Johns & Crowley, 2007).

Individual Education Plan

The Individual Education Plan (IEP) requires collaboration amongst educators and families. Yell (2012) described the planning process as a collaborative practice:

The IEP is created in a planning process in which school personnel and parents work together to develop a program of special education and related services that will result in meaningful educational benefit for the student for whom it is developed. (p. 238)

The student-centered document is designed to meet the unique needs of the student. As Goepel (2009) suggests, for the student with special needs, IEPs provide guidance in elevating student achievements. The IEP team consists of the special education teacher, parents, student, administrator, and must include at least one regular education teacher of the student on an IEP (Yell, 2012).

The general education teacher's participation in the development of the IEP is critical for several reasons. Their involvement allows them to become knowledgeable about their students' needs. Allowing general education teachers to make suggestions about aids and services, they can assist in developing and carrying out behavioral and curriculum related interventions (Mastropieri & Scruggs, 2014). "The requirement also provides an opportunity for necessary collaboration between the student's regular education and special education teachers and invites the regular education teacher's necessary perspective on the needs of the special education student in a regular education classroom" (Farnsworth, 2006, p. 641). The components of the IEP are built so that secondary and special educators have a clear understanding of the student's needs.

The Individual Education Plan components that aid in the secondary and special educators' understanding are the statements of a student's present level of academic achievement and functional performances. This portion of the IEP allows a teacher to see the student's abilities and further their capability to accommodate the student's proficiency to learn the curriculum content. The IEP also lays out a student's measurable annual goals, including academic and functional goals as well as short-term instructional goals and how these goals will be measured (Yell, 2012). "Annual goals are statements that identify what knowledge, skills and behaviors a student is expected to be able to demonstrate within the period of time from when the IEP is implemented until the next scheduled review" (Pierangelo & Giuliani, 2007, p. 56). Annual goals are designed to be measurable, positive, student oriented, and relevant to their learning needs (Yell, 2012). To ensure that all goals on the IEP are relevant, current, and reflective of the student's capabilities and needs, they are reviewed on a yearly basis unless requested sooner by teachers or parents (Mastropieri & Scruggs, 2014). The development of these goals is to be done collaboratively between special and general education teachers. As Farnsworth (2006) stated, "Inclusion of regular education teachers in the development of the educational plan[s] [and goals] helps prevent these teachers from feeling 'that their hands are tied when it comes to children with disabilities'" (p. 643).

A portion of the IEP is dedicated to outlining details of a student's need for related services and supplementary aids. As described by Turnbull et al. (2013),

IDEA defines **supplementary aids and services** as "aids, services, and other supports that are provided in regular education classes, other education-related settings, and in extracurricular and nonacademic settings, to enable children with

disabilities to be educated with nondisabled children to the maximum extent appropriate.” (pp. 33-34)

The related services and supplementary aids written in the IEP must be provided by the school districts; all services written into an IEP are a result of the needs of the student. “In addition to enumerating the types of services, the IEP should also include the amount, frequency, and duration of services” (Yell, 2012, p. 255). It is critical to remember that supplementary aids and services are noninstructional supports such as ensuring physical and cognitive access to the environments. Turnbull et al. (2013) described supplementary aids and services as “[items] such as seating arrangements and classroom acoustics, educational and assistive technology, assessment and task modifications, and support from other persons” (p. 34). In addition to these important areas of classroom teaching, the IEP describes the modifications needed for a student’s optimal learning of the course curriculum.

The IEP contains a statement of the modifications and support necessary for optimal learning (Yell, 2012). As defined by Pierangelo and Giuliani (2007), “modifications are substantial changes in what a student is expected to learn and demonstrate” (p. 84). The modifications may need to be adjusted to a student’s instructional level, content, or the performance criteria. It is critical for the special education and secondary social studies teacher to have a full understanding of a student’s abilities and needs to make modifications to course content. The information written in an IEP is a clear map to a student’s abilities and accommodations needed for learning.

Successful IEPs depend upon the cooperation of professionals, parents, and students preparing the written statements and describing an appropriate educational

program for the student with a disability. However, this procedure looks very different in each school district and the lack of understanding of the IEP process by all members of the team can prove to be challenging. While the government places an increasing responsibility on teachers to view the IEP as a collaborative document, research suggests that this is time consuming and that teachers and pupils alike require training (Pawley & Tennant, 2008).

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Educational changes through implementation of laws such as *Brown v. Board of Education* in 1954 and through No Child Left Behind of 2001 have made an impact on all educators. As a result of the requirements of No Child Left Behind, special education and general education have been required to collaborate to educate all students (Yell, 2012). The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the perceptions of secondary social studies teachers towards special education. Focusing on the words of Merriam (2009),

the overall purposes of qualitative research are to achieve an *understanding* of how people make sense out of their lives, delineate the process (rather than the outcome or product) of the meaning-making, and describe how people interpret what they experience. (p. 14)

Through this qualitative study, the focus was to understand the secondary social studies teachers' perceptions of special education. Furthermore, the secondary social studies teachers' insight about their involvement with special education has not been explored and this study created a space for the individual's specific voices and experiences to be heard.

Research Questions

The research question addressed in this study, “What is a secondary social studies teacher’s perception of special education?”, was supported by the following sub-questions to clarify the intentions of the primary question:

1. Does the secondary social studies teacher’s educational background impact his or her perceptions of special education?
2. What are the secondary social studies teachers’ perceptions of IEPs?
3. Do the secondary social studies teachers’ perceptions impact IEP implementation? And, if so, how?
4. Do these perceptions impact the collaboration between secondary and special education teachers? And, if so, how?

In addressing the research and supporting questions, the researcher used the work of Moustakas and his phenomenological theory of building both textural and structural description of the experiences of the participants (Moustakas, 1994). As defined by Moustakas (1994), “from the Individual Textural-Structural Descriptions, develop a Composite Description of the meanings and essences of the experience, representing the group as a whole” (p. 121). The research questions were designed to explore the perceptions of special education by secondary social studies teachers. Figure 3 denotes the flow of the research as directed by the method and design of the study.

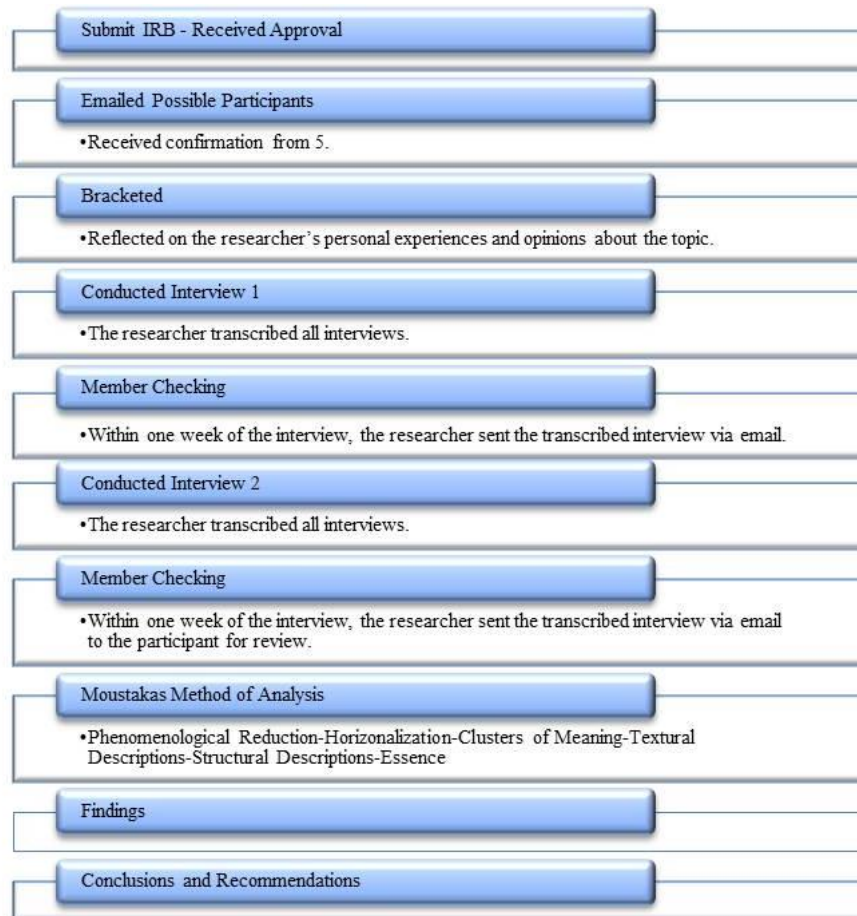


Figure 3. Flow of the Research.

Research Design

Constructivist Theory

The researcher examined the experiences of secondary social studies teachers with special education, and how these encounters have constructed perceptions of special education for secondary social studies teachers. The constructivist framework is the theoretical framework that best matches the research question, What is a secondary social studies teacher's perception of special education? As defined by Stake (2010), constructivist view is the "belief that reality is more what we presume than what it is"

(p. 218). The question, What is a secondary social studies teacher's perception of special education?, is asking for insights of secondary educators' experience. According to Stake (2010), constructivism is based on a person's interaction with the world and people and making meaning of that contact. Kitchener (1986) described constructivism as "the view that reality itself is constructed by the epistemic subject" (p. 101).

This framework of constructivism affords a better understanding of the topic since knowledge is constructed. Jean Piaget, psychologist and constructivist, felt that constructivism is the view that the subject constructs the cognitive schemes, categories, concepts, and structures necessary for knowledge (Kitchener, 1986). The teachers have constructed an understanding of their comfort level and knowledge of special education. This framework allows the participant to construct their ideas and emotions about the topic.

Phenomenology

Phenomenology was the methodology employed in this study. "Phenomenology sets aside such theories, hypotheses, and explanations as refer to biology or environment and investigates *what* is experienced and *how* it is experienced" (Wertz et al., 2011, p. 125). This study explored secondary social studies teachers' perceptions of special education. According to Merriam (2009), "phenomenology is a study of people's conscious experience of their life-world, that is, their 'everyday life and social action'" (pp. 24-25).

The phenomenological method seeks to fully describe an experience lived, or what an experience means to the person who lived it (Moustakas, 1994). Interviewing secondary social studies teachers and hearing their stories gave insight into how they

perceived special education and contributed to the significance of the phenomenological methodology that not all experiences are assumed the same.

The experience in this study was teaching in a secondary social studies classroom and the teachers' perceptions of special education. The perceptions were gathered through interviews about the secondary social studies teachers' classroom experiences with IEPs, special education teachers, modifications, inclusion, least restrictive environment, and differentiating instruction. As stated by Moustakas (1994),

because all knowledge and experience[s] are connected to phenomena, things in consciousness that appear in the surrounding world, inevitably a unity must exist between ourselves as knowers and the things or objects that we come to know and depend upon. (p. 44)

Interviewing five participants two times allowed for a clearer understanding of the secondary social studies teachers' experiences and perceptions of special education. Exploring this phenomenon through interviews allowed for patterns and relationships of meaning to develop (Moustakas, 1994).

Trustworthiness

This is a qualitative study using the constructivist theory and the methodology of phenomenology. In qualitative research, trustworthiness is defined through the process used for collecting data, such as in-depth interview, case study, or observation (Patton, 2002). As stated by Patton (2002), trustworthiness is "being balanced, fair, and conscientious in taking account of multiple perspectives, multiple interests, and multiple realities" (p. 575). Interviews and audit trails establish trustworthiness for this research. The interviews were each conducted similarly reviewing a short scenario (Appendix D

and Appendix E) and using open-ended questions, allowing the participants to substitute the names in the scenarios to protect the names of their students. As stated by Merriam (2009), “the key concern is understanding the phenomenon of interest from the participants’ perspectives, not the researcher’s” (p. 14). The interviews with five secondary social studies teachers were conducted two times each allotting 90-minute plus time frames. The 90-minute plus time frame created the space for an appropriate engagement in data collection. “Interviewers must listen hard to assess the progress of the interview and to stay alert for cues about how to move the interview forward as necessary” (Seidman, 2006, p. 79). The interviews allowed for the participants to have a sense of openness, and they were free flowing with their perceptions and experiences with special education. This addressed trustworthiness within the study (Merriam, 2009).

In qualitative research, validity is defined in terms such as quality, rigor, and trustworthiness (Patton, 2002). This study focuses on individuals who are present in the experience being studied, teachers in the field who are collaborating with special education teachers and working with students on an IEP. These individuals chosen for the study established validity through their experiences in the field of education and sharing their stories through the interview process.

The use of triangulation assisted in ensuring credibility, transferability, and dependability in the study. Triangulation, as defined by Maxwell (2005), “reduces the risk of chance associations and of systematic biases due to a specific method, and allows a better assessment of the generality of the explanations that one develops” (p. 112). Triangulation methods of member checking and an audit trail allowed the researcher to

review repeatedly the information and analyze it for accuracy and clear understanding of the participants' statements.

To ensure the transferability of the study, member checking was utilized. "Member checking is presenting a recording or draft copy of an observation or interview to the persons providing the information and asking for correction and comment" (Stake, 2010, p. 126). The member checking process was explained and discussed with the participants at the beginning of each interview. Each interview was recorded and transcribed by the researcher and the participants received the interview transcript within five days of the interview; they were given a one-week period to review and provide feedback to the researcher. As stated by Maxwell (2005),

this is the single most important way of ruling out the possibility of misinterpreting the meaning of what participants say and do and the perspective[s] they have on what is going on, as well as being an important way of identifying your own biases and misunderstandings of what you observed.

(p. 111)

In ensuring trustworthiness for the data through accurately reflecting the participants' language and meanings, an audit trail was implemented to show how the interview data were used.

As described by Merriam (2009), "an audit trail in a qualitative study describes in detail how data were collected, how categories were derived, and how decisions were made throughout the inquiry" (p. 223). Throughout this research process, an audit trail log was kept of statements, evidence, and findings from the interview dialogue. Qualitative research gets much of its claim to validity from the researcher's ability to

show convincingly how they go there, and how they built assurance that this was the best account possible (Richards, 2009). Practicing these strategies to uphold the trustworthiness and validity of this study was imperative.

The researcher's position or reflexivity is critical to ensure trustworthiness. The researcher bracketed information that could block an unbiased approach to the study. The researcher was well aware of her assumptions, biases, and relationships to this study that may create an unbiased approach. The researcher diligently practiced reflexivity by keeping a journal of information that needed to be bracketed. As discussed by Maxwell (2005), "what is important is to understand *how* you are influencing what the informant says, and how this affects the validity of the inferences you can draw from the interview" (p. 109).

Limitations

As a professional in the field of education for the last 23 years with the first 15 years in the public school systems, the researcher is currently employed at a local state institution in the department of education and psychology. The researcher's specialty is in early childhood and elementary education. Through these experiences, the researcher has developed relationships with special education departments. Additionally, the researcher has worked through utilizing the IEP, implementing goals, objectives, and modifications, as well as collaborating with special education teachers. As an acknowledgment in the limitations and critical to bracketing, the researcher has a daughter with special needs, who was diagnosed at age 6 with a learning disability in the discipline of math. By the age of 12, she was labeled with an emotional behavioral disorder (social anxiety and depression). These invisible disabilities have caused anguish and frustration for the

researcher's daughter and the researcher, her parent. The most prevalent topic in the researcher's personal story has been negotiating and working with secondary teachers to have her daughter's educational needs met. Hearing terms from the participants, such as "it is not my problem" or "special education can take care of it," may trigger strong opinions or emotions for the researcher because of personal experiences with secondary teachers. As a researcher, navigating and maintaining an awareness of assumptions and biases is critical to an unbiased approach.

Participants

The participants were selected using purposeful sampling. Defined by Merriam (2009), "purposeful sampling is based on the assumption that the investigator wants to discover, understand, and gain insight and therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned" (p. 77). For the purpose of this research study, secondary social studies teachers were selected given specific parameters. A participant was required to have at least three years of teaching experience and currently working with or has worked with at least one student on an IEP. The student's IEP was not the focus of the interview, so the diagnosis related to the IEP was not relevant. The focus was on the secondary social studies teachers' perceptions of working with the IEP document and the special education programs. Given the voluntary participant pool, there was a deliberate effort to have an equal number of males and females. With Institutional Review Board (IRB) and school district approval, social studies teachers were contacted via email through addresses provided by the district.

For this research, five secondary social studies teachers was the population chosen to participate in the study. This population of participants is currently teaching and had

current experiences to share in the interview process. Of the five social studies teachers (four males, one female), four were from the district's high school, one was from the middle school, and all had a varied range of experiences and years of service.

Mark, a high school social studies teacher in his 26th year, is in his 18th year at this current high school. He teaches six periods throughout the day with one prep. He currently team teaches with an English Language Learner (ELL) teacher for his ELL U.S. History course one period per day. Mark also teaches other sections of U.S. History and Global Education.

Tim, teaching for 32 years, however, has been teaching social studies for the last 10 years. Prior to his current teaching position, he was a special education teacher. He currently teaches six periods throughout the day, including working with freshmen and sophomores, and teaching Global Education.

James, in his 18th year of teaching, has been at his current high school for eight years. He teaches freshmen, sophomores, and juniors Global Education and Psychology. James is also an athletic coach.

Bob is in his 30th year of teaching and has taught in the same high school his entire career. He has watched the changes in special education unfold throughout his career. Bob teaches juniors and seniors U.S. History and Government.

Ann, with 12 years of teaching experience, is in her third year at a middle school. She currently teaches seventh grade Geography each period of the school day. Ann's middle school practices a "team" philosophy; one teacher for each subject area works on an educational team for the same 107 students.

Table 1 denotes the amount of students on an IEP presented in each participant's classroom on a daily basis. Of the five participants, two described the amount of students on an IEP in their classroom by a number range versus an exact count.

Table 1. IEP Totals Per Participant.

Participant	Students	Students on an IEP	Courses
Mark	126	20	Taught general and advanced placement courses
James	170	50	Taught courses that were required by all freshmen and juniors
Tim	124	15-20	Taught social studies for freshmen and sophomores
Ann	107	20-25	Taught seventh grade geography
Bob	160	40	Taught all "required" social studies courses for juniors and seniors

Data Collection

Interviews

The researcher wanted the interviewees to feel open and honest without feeling judged. Patton (2002) defined the purposes for interviews:

We cannot observe how people have organized the world and the meaning they attach to what goes on in the world. We have to ask people questions about those things. The purpose of interviewing, then, is to allow us to enter into the other person's perspective. (p. 341)

The two separate 90-plus minute interviews created this phenomenological reflection by asking about the secondary social studies teachers' thoughts, opinions, and perceptions of special education.

The recorded interviews were completed one-to-one at a location of the participants choosing. This allowed the participant the opportunity to answer the questions in their own words. Questioning teacher perceptions was a private matter and the researcher wanted the participants to be as comfortable as possible throughout the interview. "Interviews are conducted individually when the researcher believes privacy is essential...when the interviewer wants to explore each person's responses in depth" (Lodico, Spaulding, & Voegtle, 2010, p. 122). Each participant was interviewed on two separate occasions, equaling 10 interviews. This provided for an in-depth look into a social studies teacher's perceptions of special education.

As stated by Patton (2002), "the purpose of interviewing...is to allow us to enter into the other person's perspective" (p. 341). The scenarios used for each interview represented four students, with scenario one (Appendix D) focusing on the beginning of the school year and scenario two (Appendix E) reflecting on preparation for parent teacher conferences. The scenarios proved beneficial for the participant's by being able to relate their students to the individuals described in the scenario. This allowed them to describe their teaching experiences while keeping their students anonymous. As defined

by Merriam (2009), “vicarious experience is less likely to produce defensiveness and resistance” (p. 259).

The 10 interviews provided for distinct perspectives of the participants and for deep insight into their special education perceptions. The viewpoints of the participants provided textural and structural descriptions to build the data needed for this study. As stated by Merriam (2009), “to get...[to] the essence or basic underlying structure of the meaning of an experience, the phenomenological interview is the primary method of data collection” (p. 25).

Bracketing

When working with personal experiences, the researcher needs to listen to the participant’s story, without inflecting their own personal biases (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). As stated by Chan, Fung, and Chien (2013), “bracketing is a methodological device of phenomenological inquiry that requires deliberate putting aside one’s own belief about the phenomenon under investigation or what one already knows about the subject prior to and throughout the phenomenological investigation” (p. 1). The researcher bracketed elements that defined the limits of an experience, when a participant was uncovering their perception and experience of special education. The researcher was reflective of personal experiences and ensured that these were not impeding on the practices of the participants. Throughout the interviews, the researcher bracketed information through a journal as a reflective tool, writing out personal biases in a narrative format and reflecting on personal stories.

As a result of personal encounters, it was the researcher’s experiences as a parent that were the most critical to bracket before beginning interviews. In addition to

bracketing the information, the researcher practiced the process described by Husserl as the freedom from suppositions, the Epoche (Moustakas, 1994). A Greek word meaning to refrain from judgment, “in the Epoche, we set aside our prejudgments, biases, and preconceived ideas about things” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 85). The researcher’s personal experiences were reflected upon and written out prior to interviewing the participants in order to clear the researcher’s mind and ready it to hear others’ experiences. As stated by Moustakas (1994),

a preparation for deriving new knowledge but also as an experience in itself, a process of setting aside predilections, prejudices, predispositions, and allowing things, events, and people to enter anew into consciousness, and to look and see them again, as if for the first time. (p. 85)

Following through with bracketing and practicing the releasing of personal experiences allowed the researcher the opportunity to listen to the participants’ experiences and validate these experiences as their own. As stated by Moustakas (1994), “the world is placed out of action, while remaining bracketed” (p. 85).

Analysis

After the interviews were completed, Moustakas’ method of analysis was conducted. An example of Moustakas’ method of analysis (Figure 4) demonstrates how text was analyzed throughout each stage. The interviews were transcribed and analyzed by hand, looking for significant statements, sentences, or quotes that helped to provide an understanding of the participants’ experience with special education. This is what Moustakas refers to as part of the Phenomenological Reduction, horizontalization (Moustakas, 1994). “*Horizontalization* is the process of laying out all the data for

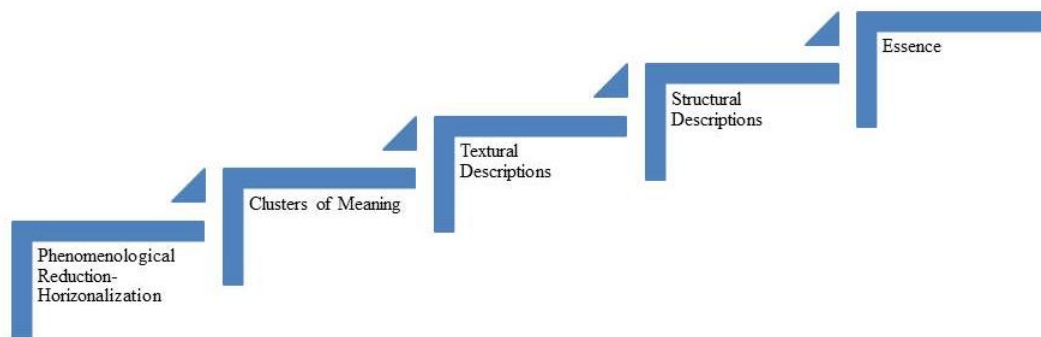


Figure 4. Moustakas' Method of Analysis.

examination and treating the data as having equal weight; that is, all pieces of data have equal value at the initial data analysis stage” (Merriam, 2009, p. 26). Through the horizontalization process, “we consider each of the horizons and the textural qualities that enable us to understand an experience” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 95). Within this process, the secondary social studies teachers’ perceptions of special education were reflected through the language, phrases, and experiences that emerged in the interview process. After the completion of horizontalization, clusters of meaning were developed as a result of the analysis of the data and placed into themes. Below (Figure 5) is an example of steps one and two in Moustakas’ method of analysis, horizontalization and clusters of meaning. The steps are demonstrated by Ann’s discussion about IEPs.

Textural

The significant statements and themes were written as textural descriptions representing what the participant had experienced. As discussed by Moustakas (1994), “following the reflective process, with its disclosure of the actualities and the potentialities of which an object is constituted, the individual constructs a full description of his or her conscious experience” (p. 47). A description was written about “what” the

Horizontalization		
I think other people that I have worked with people that actually think there is not such thing as ADHD, you know or when kids that are on IEPs are being babied or they are not doing their work or the teacher is giving them the answers and Its like I don't even, that is the last thing on my mind, if they need help or extra time, go for it. That is fine with me, you know what I mean? So far as IEPs I think it is legit and we have to do what we can to make these kids successful, you know, that is what they are there for. Our team is always working together we get a fifty minute period to work together each day. If I have questions I ask, we are supportive of each other. (Ann)		
Clusters of Meaning		
Expertise ...that is the last thing on my mind, if they need help or extra time, go for it. (Ann)	IEP Document So far as IEPs I think it is legit and we have to do what we can to make these kids successful, you know, that is what they are there for. (Ann)	Collaboration Our team is always working together we get a 50 minute period to work together each day. If I have questions I ask, we are supportive of each other. (Ann)

Figure 5. Horizontalization and Clusters of Meaning.

secondary social studies teachers have experienced with their relationships with special education, including specific examples discussed in the interviews. Below (Figure 6) is an example of step three in Moustakas' method of analysis, textural descriptions. This step is demonstrated by Ann's perception of IEPs.

Textural Description
Ann felt "support makes a difference," discussions of Individual Education Plans (IEPs) are a part of "everyday conversations." Working with special education, "It could be overwhelming, but I do not find it to be because of all the support we have, we are informed."
What: Support, Communication, Informed

Figure 6. Textural Description.

Structural

Once textural descriptions were uncovered, significant statements and themes were used to reflect and write about the context and setting that influenced how secondary social studies teachers have experienced special education. Moustakas

described this step of the analysis as *Imaginative Variation*. As defined by Moustakas (1994),

the task of Imaginative Variation is to seek possible meanings through the utilization of imagination, varying the frames of reference, employing polarities and reversals, and approaching the phenomenon from divergent perspectives, different positions, roles, or functions. (pp. 97-98)

The purpose of this step enabled the researcher to be able to develop structural descriptions of the phenomenon, the underlying and precipitating factors that accounted for what was experienced by the social studies teacher. In other words, the “how” that speaks to conditions that illustrate the “what” of the social studies teacher’s experience (Moustakas, 1994). Below (Figure 7) is an example of step four in Moustakas’ method of analysis, structural descriptions. This step is demonstrated by Ann’s discussion of IEPs.

Structural Description
Ann’s team also takes time for discussions about the IEP document, “If we have specific questions, if things we are doing are not working then we will look at it.” Ann sees the IEP document as “...legit and we have to do what we can to make these kids successful, you know, that is what they are there for.” Ann “reads through them” and is “flexible” with the expectations of the document.
How: IEP, Time

Figure 7. Structural Description.

Furthermore, the structural and textural descriptions of the interviews were studied and presented the essence of secondary social studies teachers’ perceptions of special education. The structural and textural descriptions were pertinent to arriving at the essence of the phenomenon, as described by Moustakas (1994): “The method of reflection that occurs throughout the phenomenological approach provides a logical,

systematic, and coherent resource for carrying out the analysis and synthesis needed to arrive at essential descriptions of experience” (p. 47).

Essence

Essence, as defined by Moustakas (1994), is “the intuitive integration of the fundamental textural and structural descriptions into a unified statement of the essences of the experience of the phenomenon as a whole” (p. 100). In this study, the essence (a composite description) represented the textural and structural descriptions of secondary social studies teachers’ perceptions of special education. Moustakas (1994) states, “The essences of any experience are never totally exhausted” (p. 100). Below (Figure 8) is an example of step four in Moustakas’ method of analysis, essence. This step is demonstrated by Ann’s experience. It is important to note that these are the experiences and feelings of the secondary social studies teacher at the moment of this study; their experiences may have evolved and changed over time. Moustakas’ process of analyzing phenomenological studies was conducted to ensure that the data were thoroughly and methodically analyzed.

Essence
Ann saw special education as much her responsibility as it was the special education teacher’s job. She stated, “Our team model supports working together and sharing stuff, like responsibilities of kids.” Ann’s description of the team model created a school environment where special education and general education worked together and it created a norm for “we are all responsible.”

Figure 8. Essence.

The research findings are discussed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The purpose of this phenomenological research study was to explore secondary social studies teachers' perceptions of special education. The five participants in this study shared their individual experiences as secondary social studies teachers working with students on an Individual Education Plan (IEP), attending Individual Education Planning (IEP) meetings, effects of inclusion, conferences, and collaborating with special education teachers. The interviews were analyzed using Moustakas's analysis of phenomenological data, initially completing horizontalization, reduction and elimination, clustering and thematizing the invariant constituents, validating the invariant constituents to get to the textural and structural description of each individual experience, the essence of each participant, and concluding with the essence of the group as a whole. Moustakas (1994) described textural and structural as "the meanings and essences of the experience, incorporating the invariant constituents and themes" (p. 121). This process leads to the "essences of the experience, representing the group as a whole" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 121).

Findings

Secondary Social Studies Teachers' Perceptions of Special Education

After completing a thorough analysis from the five participant interviews, the overall essence emerged as reflected by secondary social studies teachers' perceptions of

special education (Figure 9). The textural themes that emanated from the interviews were expertise and communication. As well, the structural themes that permeated each participant's perceptions of special education were placement, Individual Education Plan Document-Reader's Digest Version, and time. What ensues are the findings and discussion of both the textural and structural themes, followed by the overall essence of the experience.

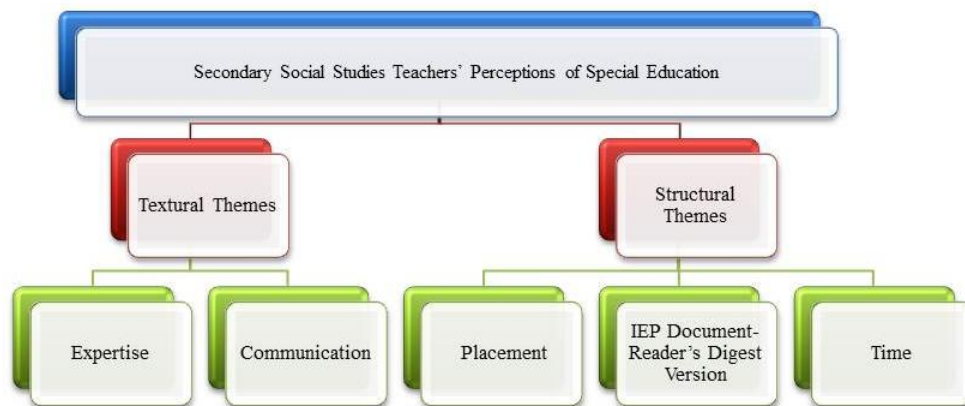


Figure 9. Textural and Structural Themes.

As noted in the textural figure (Figure 10), two distinct themes emerged through the data analysis: expertise and communication.

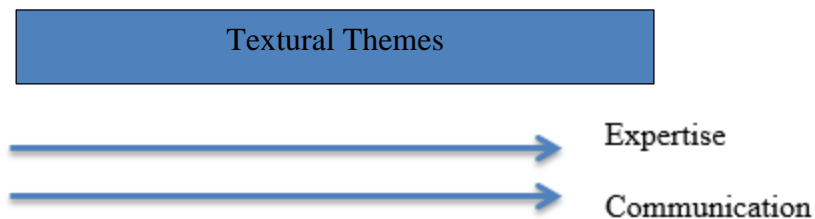


Figure 10. Textural Themes.

Textural Themes

Textural Theme One: Expertise

Each participant discussed his or her frustrations and concerns about teacher expertise and his or her ability or inability as a secondary social studies teacher to take responsibility of students on an Individual Education Plan (IEP). Teacher expertise was repeatedly discussed in the participants' interviews, revolving around how their college programs prepared them to teach in the general education classroom, but not necessarily for an inclusive environment. Mark stated, "I went to college to teach social studies or the social sciences, not special education." Mark, James, and Ann were required to take one special education course in their university career and each reflected on this course in a similar way. They expressed sentiments about what they were prepared to teach, in regards to their subject area, and were not necessarily prepared to teach all types of learners.

I had a unique undergrad experience at University. I had three phenomenal professors, they co-taught (Special Education, Strategies, and Educational Philosophy). I was ready to teach social studies, not special education. (Mark)

I remember one, that is what I remember is one. I do not remember the name of it or anything like that I just remember taking one. I learned on the job. (James)

I don't hardly even remember my special education course. I remember, you know, the thing we talked a lot about the terminology, IEP, and all of that, 504s and what that meant and we looked at some of the rules and laws dealing with it

and that is all I remember. But going into the classroom and being at that first staff meeting and you get all these acronyms thrown at you...scary. (Ann)

Bob described that he was ready for the general education classroom and, when he attended college, special education courses were not required. He said, “I took content specific things but I didn’t take special ed, had to learn everything on the job.”

Tim was the only participant who initially attended college to become a social studies teacher. He went back for a master’s in special education because of the lack of secondary social studies teaching jobs available at the time.

I barely remember my special education course for my undergrad work. I have a solid understanding of special education because of all my work in special education and my Master’s degree. (Tim)

The preparation of teachers for the general education classroom was described by each participant that they were ready, excited, and passionate about their content and motivated to teach social studies. However, terms and statements, such as frustrated, this is not for me, I was not trained for this, I got out of special education for a reason, were reflective of the participants’ overall lack of preparation for students on an IEP in their general social studies classroom.

The participants’ statements of unpreparedness or not wanting to work in the field of special education were reflective of their lack of confidence and feelings of unpreparedness for the roles they were required to take on. All five participants discussed feeling a shift in responsibilities that they were not prepared for and this shift was concerning. The shift in the special educator’s role has dramatically affected the social studies teacher’s role in the education of a student on an IEP. Tim, Bob, James, and Mark

all discussed their qualifications with students on an IEP; each described a distinct line to be drawn as a result of who has the educational expertise. Mark, Bob, and James reflected on their expertise as social studies teachers and did not feel qualified to complete the duties of a special educator.

I was ready to teach social studies, not special education. I mean you and I were to teach together, we are talking Colonial America, what do you know about Colonial America? I would do the majority of the teaching and you could reinforce with students. I teach the subject matter and special education can take care of their students. (Mark)

I depend on the paraprofessional, they know the kid better than me. I can teach and they can assist. (Bob)

I will do the teaching on my own and if I need something I ask. But I know my content and I want it to be interactive. I will teach the kids, the paraprofessionals can assist those that need help or extra stuff. (James)

Tim had similar experiences as Mark, Bob, and James; however, his previous experience as a special education teacher gave him a different overall perspective. Tim's experience gave him a unique perspective of the roles each teacher plays in the classroom. Even though he knew he was qualified to teach in special education and the secondary education classroom, he stated, "I left special education for specific reasons." Tim further stated,

The real bad thing is the teachers that are more accepting, you end up burning them out. And it is one thing to teach a class and another thing to teach a class

with many needs in it because this teacher is rigid and non-accepting. They get a vanilla class of students that are easier to teach—this is something that I observe.

With regard to expertise, each participant recognized that students on an IEP would have modifications and accommodations that needed to be implemented in their classroom. It is relevant to note that, for this study, each participant viewed the classroom environment changes as different; these were accommodations that could be easily implemented without a problem. However, the modification of student work was described by Mark and Tim with such terms as frustration, strain, and concern while James, Bob, and Ann used statements like flexible, necessary, and part of the job.

Mark referred to the expertise of the educator and did not feel he had the proper credentials to make modifications on student work. He simply stated, “I am not qualified to do that. This same sentiment about making modifications for students was also expressed by Tim.

The special ed teacher saying you have to modify, okay how do I modify? You know, do I cut multiple choice down to two answers, three answers, or what about this kid is different from that kid. Do I put the matching at groups of five you know what do we have to do? You are the expert, you know the kid, yeah they are in my class but I will give you the test. (Mark)

Modifications? Give it to the specialist, I am not going to make modifications when I do not know the student as well as the specialist. I can’t be adjusting for this one and that one, one of the tricky parts of being in a regular classroom.

(Tim)

James expressed developing modifications for students in his class and felt he was flexible and approachable when needing to be involved in meeting the needs of the students. Bob viewed the modifications as necessary and the work of special educators.

I do a lot of the modifications. I work with the paras a lot. Some special education teachers are a little more involved with modifications, where are some are more leave it up to you or the paras, whatever works. (James)

By law I am required to follow them (modifications). I have seen the laws change and know what I need to follow. I depend on special education to work things in and be part of it, I can do the simple things like add extra time and stuff. (Bob)

Ann reiterated the impact the team culture of her school had on the implementation of modifications in the classroom. Teaching in a middle school environment, Ann practices the team approach to educating all students. Even though Ann did not feel prepared to work with students on an IEP in the beginning of her career, her school's team culture allowed her to view the needs of a student on an IEP as needs you would want to meet anyway. Ann further describes her perception of modifications and working with the special education teacher as "just a part of the day, What is different or separate about what I need to do as a classroom teacher and my specialist's responsibility and stuff?"

The special education teacher was viewed as part of the teaching team and available for questions, modifying work, and helping with parent communication. The consistent communication between Ann and her special education teacher diffused the idea of who is responsible. She emphasized that daily discussions created an environment

and attitude amongst her colleagues of being able to ask for help in regards to modifications or completing them on their own.

My special ed teacher she would do it in a heartbeat, she just needs to know the information. If there are modifications such as cut down questions, shorten requirements on projects things like this I do on my own. Mostly teach, how I teach and change assignments or state explanations as needed. (Ann)

The participants' perceptions of their expertise and how this affected their ability to implement special education services was perceived in various ways. The participants' ability to implement modifications and accommodations reflected many different entities in the classroom such as, the amount of paraprofessional help in the classroom, collaborative communication between special and general education teachers, and the number of students on an IEP placed in the classroom.

Textural Theme Two: Communication

All five participants expressed the significance of communication between special education and the social studies teacher. Mark, Tim, Bob, and James described interactions between themselves and the special education teacher.

The special education teacher can do the modifications, not me. They know the kid and that is their job. I don't have time to talk about it. (Mark)

Communication and working closely with special education teachers, it is good. (Tim)

I look to the paraprofessionals for help. (Bob)

Communication is critical. I ask what they think and will ask questions if I have time. (James)

Even though Mark, Tim, Bob, and James described interactions with special education teachers as surface communication, each stated this was important for their work with students on an IEP. As each of these four described communication, they defined one-way conversations that relied on being told information, given directions, versus conversations that involved give and take. Communication and collaboration are supportive of one another.

Ann described the importance of communication and recognized that her middle school model differed from the high school. The team philosophy practiced at Ann's middle school allowed for the communication between the general education and special education teacher to be a natural occurrence, allowing the special education teacher to be viewed as part of the teaching team. The middle school model set aside a 50-minute period each day for the teaching team to work together and communicate daily. Collaborative communication was built into Ann's day.

Relationships between colleagues was also discussed between secondary social studies and special education teachers; this either aided or hindered communication between the two departments. All five participants reflected on the ease in which they could communicate with individuals they identified as friends or had a close professional relationship. For example, Ann, described her experience as unusual.

Our team model forces us to talk all the time. I should not say force. I take it for granted that we don't have a communication issue. It would be overwhelming, but I do not find it to be because of all the support we have, we are informed. (Ann)

The consistent communication between Ann and her special education teacher created an environment that Ann described as “really good and that is what everybody needs. I think the middle school is set up really well for that.” Mark also described relationships as a factor into who he communicates within the special education department.

I would usually only get certain special education teachers kids and these are the ones that knew me really well from past work experiences. And there are others down the hall so she will give us her kids, some of the others, not so much. I don’t know if it is because they don’t know me or I have a rep. (Mark)

Tim and James did not refer to friendships between themselves and special education teachers; they referred to teachers who were close to them and easy to see in person and were a part of their day.

Emails for rapid information are you know simple, easy and quick, but I get around the building a lot so do specialists so stopping in and having a two minute conversation I think is still the best not the most convenient but we do it. (Tim)

I usually check my email every period typically, especially when I get to know the kids names. If not, walking down and talking. And that is actually the best thing we are not too far away. (James)

Bob discussed the benefit of proximity to the special education department, but he focused more on communicating with the paraprofessionals who are in his classroom. He explained that he likes to work with the paraprofessional and stated he prefers to “keep them moving and involved.”

They [paraprofessional] are worked in the classroom as part of the curriculum, I am the social studies teacher they are the special educators they can help with well okay, this student is capable of doing this or can we do this, it is nice to have the sounding board to run ideas by, is this kind of project going to work. (Bob)

The textural theme, communication, permeated the structural themes placement, IEP document-Reader's Digest Version, and time. Through the interview process, communication consistently was the foundation of each structural theme, it was integral in defining student placements, discussing IEP documents, and IEP meetings. Communication was described by the participants as frustrating, beneficial, important, needed and necessary, and connection.

Structural Themes

Each structural theme was influenced by the number of students on an IEP in the social studies classroom. All five participants expected students on an IEP to be placed in their general education classroom. As indicated in the structural figure (Figure 11), three distinct themes emerged through the data analysis: placement, IEP document-Reader's Digest Version, and time. It should be noted that the structural themes are interwoven in the description and the participants often linked and overlapped structural and textural themes. Therefore, to protect from diminishing the participant voice, the linkage is specifically retained within the descriptions.

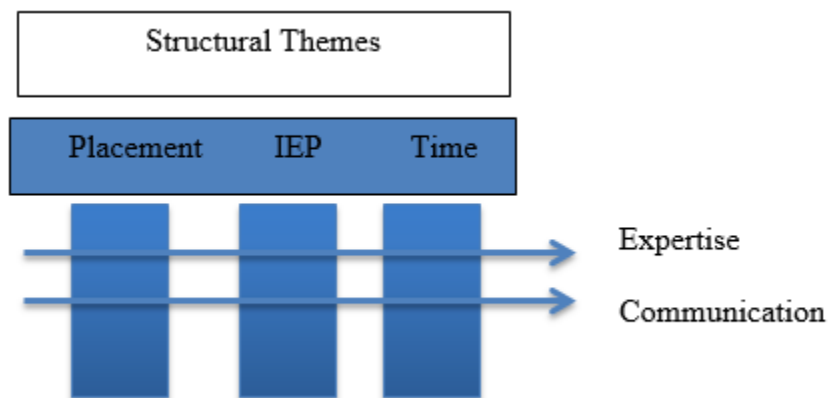


Figure 11. Structural Themes.

Structural Theme One: Placement

Structural theme one was placement. Relative to student placement, a least restrictive environment was emphasized throughout the interviews as each participant stated it was part of the law. The participants discussed the decision making process and communication between educators, in regards to the placement of students on an IEP in the least restrictive environment. In addition to the placement of students, the participants were concerned with the number of students on an IEP in any one classroom and how this impacted their teaching. Mark did not view the placement of students as part of his job and felt it was special education's responsibility to complete. However, the number of students on an IEP placed in Mark's classroom was a concern for him.

The only, you know, the only problem we have is sometimes scheduling wise there gonna dump a bunch of IEP kids in one class. What usually goes through the mind is why are you dumping all these kids in my room. There has got to be a way to spread them out, why is my fifth period class always the class to have 20 IEPs. We talk about it in our group we understand that for the special ed teacher if they can center most of their caseload in one period that is fine, but when you

have three of them [special education teachers] that are going to do it okay we need a little bit more common sense. First thing going through the mind is frustration why are you doing this? Why is it this period or why is it that period? Why does this teacher get it? Why does that teacher get it? (Mark)

In regards to special education student placement, Tim shared two different perspectives as both a social studies teacher and special education teacher.

The rights of the one individual have to be safe guarded but you know what it is the rights and the safety of everybody and that is where a classroom teacher is at. Specialist tend to be working with a small group and they are very very involved but they are not global in the sense of all the children in the classroom and the general teacher is responsible for all the children in the class. (Tim)

On the other hand, Tim was sympathetic to the placement process from the perspective of the special education teacher.

I am going to teach everybody that comes in the door. I may not be good at some and better at others. I don't have the luxury as a public school teacher that I can pick and choose and some by their actions can pick what they want. I know as a specialist I was not going to put kids in that classroom because they will have a bad experience. (Tim)

Tim said it was more about pluses and minuses when it came to inclusion and placement of students in the least restrictive environment. He discussed the least restrictive environment and was concerned that students not on an IEP may have their education compromised.

Special education laws needed to be upheld, however, a lot of the classes they [students on an IEP] were included in were just to say they were included, it sounded good. (Tim)

At the time of the interview, Tim was struggling to find a good fit for a student who would screech and scream throughout class and felt this was disruptive to the other students. He reiterated that the placement should be beneficial for the student on an IEP and their peers.

All students have rights and deserve to get the best education that they can, don't think things should be done without the consideration of everyone in mind, not just that one person. (Tim)

Similar in their perceptions of student placements, James and Bob both taught required social studies courses and as a result had all of the students. In their experience, students on an IEP often were accompanied by paraprofessionals. James and Bob expressed gratitude towards their school and the help they received from the paraprofessionals who worked with students in their classroom.

Our school does a good job of providing us with paras is a big thing and uh and I know paras don't get paid near enough for some of the jobs they have to do but every little bit helps. Especially when you are dealing with 30 kids in a classroom is a lot with just out IEPs or learning problems, or whatever type of problems, life problems, and trying to keep track of all that and trying to keep everyone on board. (James)

Let's make sure there is a para in here, it is just me with this group of students, and their learning differences I can concentrate as much as possible on the other 20 students in class and we will make this work. (Bob)

Ann's experience for student placement differed from the other four participants. She expressed that her job and personal knowledge influenced her understanding of student placement. Ann was the only individual who told of a personal story that connected her to special education.

I have always had the same attitude towards them, I think this comes from my sister. She had many problems, she was more ED and I was empathetic towards her and I knew that it existed and I was thankful for those people, so you know, so I respect it [special education]. (Ann)

Ann also did not define the placement of students as counting the number of students on an IEP in her classroom. Her philosophy was "I teach them all, that is what I do." Ann further expressed the importance of her teaching team and stated that they are "in it together." Ann stated, "It could be overwhelming, but I do not find it to be because of all the support we have, we are informed." Ann defined her attitude towards educating students with a variety of abilities: "The idea behind education isn't about screwing up and now what are you going to do, you need to know the information, make yourself informed."

Structural Theme Two: Individual Education Plan Document-Reader's Digest Version

Each participant was aware of the Individual Education Plan (IEP), understood the document's significance, and had IEPs available as needed. The IEP is a document

for educators to use to develop developmentally appropriate educational experiences for the student. The IEP for each child with a disability must include “Statements of the student’s present level of academic achievement of functional performance in an area of need include how a student’s disability affects his or her involvement and progress in the general education curriculum” (Pierangelo & Giuliani, 2007, p. 41).

The IEP is a document that Mark has access to review. He stated, “We usually don’t get the IEPs until the fall,” but felt he understood the document. Mark further stated, “Pretty much everyone is really aware of the IEP, the 504 so, we know not to mess around with it too much.” Mark discussed wanting a shortened version of the document so he knows the gist of what needs to be done.

We used to receive the full IEP and one of my colleagues when he was department chair said, we are idiots, we do not know what this means. Give us a sheet that has the accommodations and I think there are some legal issues that you don’t, you want to really, you don’t want to let that stuff out so a lot of time we want a one page a Reader’s Digest version, what is the disability, and what do we got to do. (Mark)

Similar to Mark, James has access to the IEP documents in the fall and focuses on what he may need to do differently for the student. He has a system for understanding student modifications in his classroom.

We as teachers like to be told what to look, like tell us to look at it and 95% of us will take a look and read and take it right to heart and deal with it. I have a folder that has all the names and their needs, I keep it with me to remind me, a lot to remember. (James)

If I wanted to read the entire thing I could request it. They do not give us the IEP because what is the point? We need to know where they are at, what they need to get through it as well. I have too many good books I want to read. (Tim)

Tim stated the special education teachers do have a system to distribute information to educators in his school about a student's present level of performance and modifications or accommodations that are required.

The specialist will have folders with present level performance and accommodations and they will put those folders in teachers' mailboxes and a list of teachers those students have for the class and check it off and send it to the next teacher on the list and read through. (Tim)

Tim could take notes about students, but did not have a document in hand to reference daily.

In contrast to Mark, James, and Tim's perception of IEPs, Ann's support for collaboration and the importance of communication were represented in her reflection of the IEP document. All teachers have access to the IEP documents and they are routinely used. Her team also takes time for discussions about the IEP document.

During team time we do a lot with data and we will look through them [IEP]. If we have specific questions, if things we are doing are not working then we will look at it. (Ann)

Ann reads through the IEPs and takes notes about the document's expectations. Ann described her thoughts about the IEP document.

It is legit and we have to do what we can to make these kids successful, you know, that is what they are there for. You have to be very flexible and that is the

biggest thing to be flexible and if you try something and it doesn't work try something else and ask other people what works for them. (Ann)

Similar to Ann, Bob stated his recognition of the significance of the IEP document and understood the importance of following through with the requirements listed. The IEP is a critical part of the relationship between Bob and the special education teachers.

You collaborate with them [special educators] anyway when you get their IEPs and 504s it is a form of collaboration you understand what you are legally bound to do. (Bob)

Bob teaches courses that are required for all high school students and, as a result, he stated "has seen it all." Bob estimated the number of students on an IEP in his classes.

In some way shape or form students receiving some sort of academic assistance it would be a one-fourth of them. (Bob)

Structural Theme Three: Time

The theme of time was evidenced when participants discussed IEP meetings, IEP document review, and communication with the special education teachers, parents, and students. The social studies high school teachers saw their duties as content specific and also viewed the development of the IEP as not part of their content or expertise.

Each of the participants discussed attending IEP meetings, which are typically held the last hour of the school day schedule. Mark's perception of the IEP document and his approach to the IEP meetings were similar.

I am here that is what is required. I don't need to hear the 25 page this testing is this, that testing is that, mainly because I do not understand. Like I said give me

the nuts and bolts and tell me what I need to do, here is what the kids like in class.

(Mark)

Mark does not see himself as a part of the IEP team; however, he knows that the decisions made at the meeting will affect him as the classroom teacher. Mark described his participation at an IEP meeting.

When I go to the IEP meeting I do not even sit down, I stand because I have got another meeting, I am going to say my piece, you are going to send me the accommodations, and I am gone. (Mark)

On the other hand, Tim feels at IEP meetings there is communication amongst faculty and this enhances the development and implementation of the IEP document.

I really like the way the specialists at our high school handle it, they got it down to a really good system. I come to the IEP meetings with printouts and grades. I have 5 to 10 minutes and just talk about things are going and ask if there are questions, will say thank you very much and appreciate your time. I am not required to sit and listen to diagnostic reporting and present level of performance. I have 15 students on IEPs and they expect me to come and sit through the whole meeting that may be an hour in an half, which would not sit well. (Tim)

Even though he saw the benefit of the IEP meetings, Tim appreciated not having to attend the entire meeting.

James found it difficult to attend IEP meetings as a result of his coaching schedule. In order for him to attend an IEP meeting as schedules are difficult to align, he and the special education teachers have to prepare either over email, face to face, or through forms. James described the logistics of preparing for an IEP meeting.

Logistically for myself it is a lot. I send a lot of emails. They have forms they send us we fill out it goes from what works, what doesn't work, what do you think works, particularly your class. How does he do in your room with this method because you are this type of teacher versus another teacher as a lecture teacher a lot of comparing that way. (James)

So even though James may not be physically present at each IEP meeting, he feels he is not missing them as a result of his advanced preparation.

I do not miss communicating in the IEP, I fill out the form and make sure that my thoughts, and statements are represented. (James)

When he can attend IEP meetings, James stated that he “discusses with parents whether students are doing homework, listening, paying attention.”

Ann stated that conferences and IEP meetings are at times the same thing, for logistical reasons.

The parents that do not come to the conferences we just met with them on the IEPs and that is where we are getting information. (Ann)

Ann described how she prepares for an IEP meeting.

She [special education teacher] sends out a form on google and we fill out what we feel, strengths, weaknesses, what kinds of things we are doing. (Ann)

Ann further described the format of the IEP meeting as a team approach. Ann stated one team member attends the IEP meeting.

She [special education teacher] has all that information she can use and one teacher represents all of us. The special education teacher runs the IEP meetings, and we take turns on the team. (Ann)

The only time the entire team is present is for transition IEP meetings.

We will be in there...as a team and sometimes we all want to share and it seems like it is a longer conference. (Ann)

Similar to Ann's experience, Bob's school also coordinates students' IEP meetings with conferences.

Special needs students, rarely do we get them to show up for conferences because we have IEPs and 504 meetings which is basically the same thing. (Bob)

In preparation for the IEP meetings, the special education teachers send out a notice of the meeting. At the IEP meeting, the general education teachers speak first.

Teachers are allowed to go first and say okay here is where the student is at this point here are strengths and here are weaknesses and things that are not academic issues it might be attendance. (Bob)

Since Bob primarily teaches juniors and seniors, there is a major focus on transition.

They are transitioning out. It is a three year assessment so what do we have to do?

What is the next step for me to go with this student to continue their progress?"

We leave time for questions and once the discussion is done with us teachers are able to leave. (Bob)

Bob acknowledged the importance of a student's transition plan. Bob was very aware that his courses were part of the requirements for a successful graduation. Similar to Tim, Mark, and James, leaving the IEP meeting was also a natural occurrence for Bob.

Discussion

Textural Theme One: Expertise

Each participant stated they were ready to teach in their area of expertise, social studies. Conversely, each participant stated that they were not prepared for the rigors or expectations of special education. As each of the participants have progressed through their careers, they have seen a change in roles of the general and special education teacher. Through the role shift of the special education teacher, this has put more responsibilities on the general education teacher. As stated by Turner (2003), “the role of special educators has changed dramatically, with a shift from direct provider of instruction to facilitator and consultant” (p. 491).

Despite the shift in teacher roles, there is a plethora of research indicating that educators must be educated and skilled to teach in all learning environments, while being able to support various types of learners (Chesley & Jordan, 2012; Ellins & Porter, 2005; Gökdere, 2012; Grskovic & Trzcinka, 2011; Jenkins et al., 2002). Each participant described gaining their understanding of special education on the job, excluding Tim, who has a master’s degree in special education. Furthermore, with the inclusive movement throughout education, teachers need to be prepared to teach all types of learners. Turner (2003) suggests, “As schools across the country move toward more inclusive model of education, both preservice and inservice teachers must be prepared to meet this challenge through a sound knowledge base and development of appropriate dispositions and performances” (p. 495). It is evident in the findings that the secondary social studies teachers found expertise to be critical and they did not feel as though they were the expert in special education. Even though Tim has a master’s degree in special

education, he made the transition to the general education classroom to move away from the responsibilities of special education. Conversely, Ann stated numerous times that the middle school environment demanded collaboration between general and special education. This collaborative culture gave Ann a perspective of teamwork between herself and special education.

Teacher expertise and efficacy emerged throughout the interviews. The secondary social studies teachers were comfortable and confident in their content when discussing social studies and their specific courses. Klassen et al. (2011) describe teacher efficacy as “the confidence teachers hold about their individual and collective capability to influence student learning...one of the key motivation beliefs influencing teachers’ professional behaviors and student learning” (p. 21). The shift in the secondary social studies teachers’ efficacy when discussing special education was shown through language, words, and ideas. Self-efficacy plays a role in teacher effectiveness. The argument is furthered by Angle and Moseley (2009), who contend “a teacher’s sense of self-efficacy plays a powerful role in student academic achievement..., as well as in receptiveness to implementing new instructional practices to meet the needs of all students...and commitment to teaching” (p. 474).

Of note, it was evident that Ann had a differing view than the other participants who teach in a high school setting. Ann viewed teaching as a team and did not question responsibilities that were special education related; she felt support to teach all students and Ann viewed educating all students as the responsibility of everyone, not some (Tomlinson, 2005). Kelm and McIntosh (2012) emphasized that “teachers with a high sense of self-efficacy are more likely to persist in teaching students with difficulties, set

more ambitious goals for students, and support the inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education classroom” (p. 138). Ann’s middle school culture created blurred lines versus distinct feelings of “us” and “them” in regards to who is qualified to teach students with a special need. “Teachers are more apt to assume collaborative roles when situated within the context of collaborative school cultures” (Conderman & Johnston-Rodriguez, 2009, p. 243).

The other four participants had distinct departmental divisions as a result of the high school setting, Social studies and special education were separate departments. Further understanding of the “us” and “them” idea can be traced back to how educators are prepared for their teaching role. Conderman and Johnston-Rodriguez (2009) suggest, “Many researchers agree that the major responsibility for changing teacher attitudes and skills about inclusion and collaboration rests with teacher-preparation programs” (p. 236). The emphasis in the reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) was for teacher collaboration amongst general and special education teachers. However, the university education programs still educate students by major, enforcing a teacher candidate to have a repertoire of knowledge for their subject. “Teachers are more apt to assume collaborative roles when situated within the context of collaborative school cultures” (Conderman & Johnston-Rodriguez, 2009, p. 243).

Teacher expertise also emerged as a part of the dialogue about modification support by each participant. As defined by Pierangelo and Giuliani (2007), “modifications are substantial changes in what a student is expected to learn and demonstrate. Changes may be made in the instructional level, the content, or the performance criteria” (p. 84). Each participant recognized that modifications are written

in an IEP and knew that they needed to be implemented in their classroom. Each discussed the challenges that modifications present in the classroom. As stated by Brigham et al. (2011), “inclusive classes present challenges in that students may learn at very different rates, and may require differential amounts of practice” (p. 228). Each participant described the challenges of educating and implementing modifications. However, their understanding of who is responsible to implement, monitor, and follow through to fruition differed. The differing of opinions reflected each participant’s perception of special education.

Textural Theme Two: Communication

Communication was referenced throughout all five participant interviews, and all agreeing that this is the basis of all working relationships. Communication was key for relaying information at IEP meetings; developing the IEP document; implementing modifications and accommodations; working with special education teachers, parents, and students. Research supports the collaborative efforts between the secondary social studies teacher and special education teacher, as this is the basis for an adequate education for children on an IEP. As described by Lingo, Barton-Arwood, and Jolivet (2011), “the focus is on teachers working together with an assumption that collaboration leads to improved student academic achievement” (p. 6).

Conversely, all five participants’ ability or inability to set aside time to clearly communicate and allow for give and take between social studies and special education teachers was dependent upon the structure of the daily schedule. The daily schedule affected the amount of time that was allotted for interaction, professional development, and IEP meetings. These structural entities in a school affect the ability or inability for

good communication. This issue is also discussed in the literature, as Scanlon and Baker (2012) described the difficulties of communications at the secondary level: “The secondary context presents unique challenges to inclusion, secondary teachers contend with large student caseloads, minimal planning time, varied instructional formats, and high expectations” (p. 213). All of the day-to-day responsibilities begin to create an island effect, teaching all alone, not seeking out the expertise of others. Schedules, the perceptions of roles in the classroom, professional relationships amongst colleagues all contributed and/or hindered productive communication across disciplines. Ann’s middle school model provided a team culture that supported individuals to work as a team versus the departmental structure of a high school, both methods affecting communication amongst colleagues.

Structural Theme One: Placement

Supported by the literature and throughout the secondary social studies teachers’ interviews, the placement of students on an IEP in the general education classroom is often done by the special education teacher, with little to no input from the secondary educator (Gökdere, 2012; Gotshall & Stefanou, 2011; McDuffie et al., 2009).

Conversely, Sailor and McCart (2014) discussed the implementation of programs in isolation versus in collaboration between departments. They identified that “schools consistently fail to adequately implement and sustain educational practices to impact academic outcomes for students with disabilities” (Sailor & McCart, 2014, p. 59). A joint decision between the special education teacher and the secondary social studies teacher is considered best practice.

The placement of students on an IEP in the general education classroom forces an educator to reflect upon the appropriate teaching strategies to deliver the course content. As stated earlier, Swanson (2008) reported that roughly 80% of the high school students with disabilities were in general education classes most of the day. “All secondary teacher candidates should develop the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to educate students with disabilities in included classrooms” (Grskovic & Trzcinka, 2011, p. 96). Students on an IEP placed in a general education classroom without discussion between educators versus collaboratively making the decision can cause large class sizes and difficulty to meet the needs of the student. A study conducted by Carpenter and Dyal (2007) concluded that “class size is important but general educators must also change their teaching practices to meet the needs of students in the diverse classroom” (p. 348).

For all participants, the placement of a student with special needs in the social studies classroom often resulted in the addition of paraprofessionals and this required collaboration amongst teaching professionals. It is also important to note that the participants described collaboration between themselves and special education teachers when working with the paraprofessionals in the classroom. Mastropieri and Scruggs (2001) suggest,

High school setting presented greater obstacles for co-teachers because of the emphasis on content area knowledge, the need for independent study skills, the faster pacing of instruction, high stakes testing, high school competency exams, less positive attitude of teachers and the inconsistent success of strategies that were effective at the elementary level. (p. 267)

Simmons et al. (2012) also recognized barriers and “identified a need for candidates in secondary education initial certification programs to have more knowledge and skills related to working with secondary students with disabilities” (p. 757).

The decision to place a student with an IEP in the general education classroom is meant to be a team effort by both secondary and special education teachers. This decision is derived from a consensus as to what is the least restrictive environment for the student (Mastropieri & Scruggs, 2014). However, Sailor and McCart (2014) found “most models of inclusion have been driven almost entirely by special education with little or no design involvement from general education [teachers]” (p. 59). With the exception of Ann, in all participant interviews the placement of students affected the social studies teacher and the special education teacher. This is notable in that the participants revealed their frustration about the process. “Effective inclusion programs for students with disabilities require a culture of collaboration as both special education and general education teachers face a myriad of issues as they implement quality inclusion within the secondary environment” (Simmons et al., 2012, p. 754). The educational expectations of secondary students with disabilities can be daunting as they must pass several core disciplines in order to graduate, with social studies being a part of this nucleus. “Too complicate the matter, many Special Education teachers are not content experts in these content domains, which may limit their ability to facilitate student learning” (Mastropieri & Scruggs, 2001, p. 267).

Structural Theme Two: Individual Education Plan Document-Reader's Digest Version

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) has set parameters and expectations for the education of students who have qualified for special education. As part of IDEA, the Individual Education Plan (IEP) provides the team with a blueprint of the unique needs of a student. Bob, James, Mark, Tim, and Ann were aware of special education and the need to follow the IEP. Bob, James, Mark, and Tim viewed the special educator as the individual responsible for educating the student on an IEP. Contra wise, Ann saw the special education teacher as a team member as a result of the middle school team model her school practiced.

Ann described daily conversations with the special education teacher during their morning team meetings and how the IEP was a consistent part of the team discussions. This resulted in Ann's comfort with the IEP document overall. On the other hand, Bob, James, Tim, and Mark described quick interactions with the special education teachers to receive the "basics" or what the teacher is expected to do. Ongoing discussion and collaboration with the special education teachers about the IEP document is critical to the implementation. As described by Gökdere (2012), "it is recommended that classroom teacher[s] should be informed about inclusive students before practice and the quality of the support services that the special educators provides ordinary teachers" (p. 2801). Collaboration also creates supportive relationships across departments. Hancock and Scherff (2010) suggested, "[A] positive school culture that is conducive to collaboration and dialogue promotes a shared culture, is fair in distributing resources and reward, and

fosters positive beliefs that can aid in increasing teachers' self-efficacy and collective efficacy" (p. 330).

While the participants shared that the only information needed from the IEP was the modifications, research supports that general education teachers have an understanding of the document as a whole to best assist the student in the classroom (Friend & Bursuck, 2009; Goepel, 2009; Mastropieri & Scruggs, 2014; Scanlon & Baker, 2012). Goepel (2009) highlights that "an IEP should record what is 'additional to' and 'different from' the teacher's regular differentiated planning and should be reviewed at least twice annually" (p. 126). Contrary to Bob, James, Tim, and Mark's practice, research supports the importance of the secondary education teacher reviewing the IEP plans of students assigned to the general education classroom (Friend & Bursuck, 2009; Mastropieri & Scruggs, 2014). Ann was knowledgeable about modifications, accommodations, supplementary aides, and services.

Even though the review of the IEP document was discussed as only requiring a general conversation between secondary social studies teachers and special education teachers, all five participants consistently shared their appreciation for the special education teachers. This perception is supported by the literature. Sailor and McCart (2014) described how "general educators value special educators for what they offer the total school and special educators value the curricular support offered by the general educators" (p. 61). While general educators and special educators value each other, there is a lack of collaboration on the creation of the IEPs (Friend & Bursuck, 2009; Goepel, 2009; Mastropieri & Scruggs, 2014; Sailor & McCart, 2014). Bob, James, Mark, and Tim saw it as a tool to "flip" through at the beginning of the year and as needed.

Lee-Tarver (2006) surveyed educators' perceptions of the IEP and found that "fifty-one percent of teachers agreed that IEPs help to organize and structure their teaching and 12% strongly agreed" (p. 267). However, the overall perception from the participants was opposite. For the participants, the descriptions of attending IEP meetings were focused on the amount of time allotted to attend and hear information that directly affected the students in their classrooms. The participants for this study did not see the IEP as a tool to "structure" their teaching; it was a legal document that was available to review.

Structural Theme Three: Time

The participants perceived the development of the IEP document and IEP meetings as time consuming with limited sense of collaboration. All participants attended the IEP meetings in some capacity. For example, four of the participants saw the special education "duties" as a responsibility of the special education teacher with a distinctive line drawn between their role and time spent. McDuffie et al. (2009) discussed this point: "A potential problem with collaboration between secondary special educators and content area specialists, however, is a lack of crossover of the content knowledge and pedagogical skills between general and special educators" (p. 494).

Goepel (2009) discussed the development of the IEP and how "common understanding was considered fundamental to a robust and supportive partnership and to the drawing up of an effective IEP to which all parties could give allegiance" (p. 131). All five of the participants in this study viewed the IEP meeting as the special education teacher's responsibility. Not evidenced by the participants, Williams-Diehm et al. (2014) indicate, "IEPs are designed to be developed by each student's IEP team, which consists

of teachers, parents, students and other professionals who work collaboratively to develop goals and supportive plans” (p. 4). Each participant was willing to participate by providing information in the meeting, when it pertained to their course and content. This practice is contrary to what is considered best practice. Research supports the involvement of general education teachers throughout the process of the IEP meetings. Contrary to the participants’ perception in this study, the IEP meeting is a time to learn about a student beyond surface information. Secondary educators play an important role at the meeting and are able to establish a better understanding of the student on an IEP (Friend & Bursuck, 2009).

It is critical for participants to understand the connection between collaborative decision making and developing a student’s goals and objectives together. Goals and objectives should be developed as a team through a decision making process based on formal and informal assessment data regarding the child’s current strengths and weaknesses gathered through a nondiscriminatory evaluation (Turnbull et al., 2013). It has been established that students benefit from a collaborative educational approach between general education teachers and special education teachers. Gotshall and Stefanou (2011) stated,

When teachers feel confident in the work they do, especially when working with students who struggle and for whom accommodations must be made and adjusted over time, then the spill-over effects might be seen in more students meeting grade-level expectations within their general education classroom. (p. 329)

Essence

Throughout this study, there are fundamental structures that emerged: the IEP document, placement of a student on an IEP, and time. These three structural elements are what secondary social studies teachers must navigate throughout the school year. Below (Figure 12) the three structures are represented.



Figure 12. Fundamental Structures.

As the participants navigate the responsibilities placed upon them, each had specific experiences. These experiences were reflected through the textural themes of expertise and communication (Figure 13). Representative of the participants' textural descriptions, the arrows continuously run through the structures creating an integration of the textural and structural descriptions.



Figure 13. Structural and Textural Interactions.

The research revealed (Figure 14) the emergence of the intricate weaving of structural and textural themes.

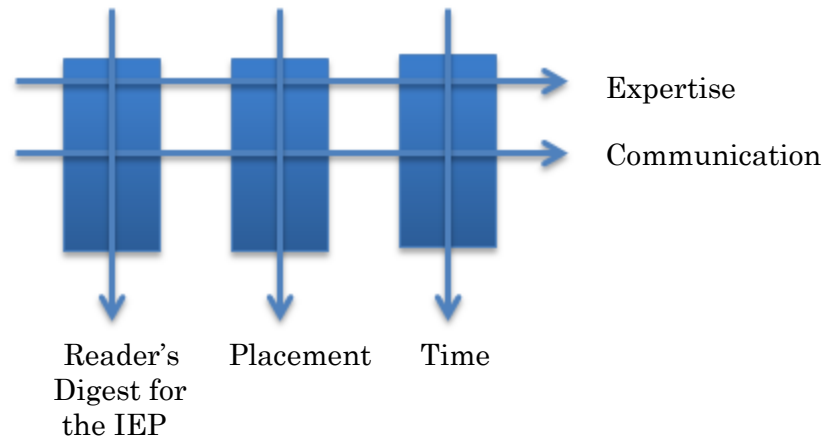


Figure 14. Overall Essence.

The overall essence was that secondary social studies teachers did not see themselves as a part of the special education process or special education department. Their social studies content was their priority and what they were prepared to teach. Overall, the participants felt that the special education teachers knew the students on an IEP better and it was their job to educate them. The secondary social studies teachers' responsibility was to ensure they understand the social studies content. Despite the intricate weaving of their educational roles, there was a continuous parallel relationship between secondary social studies teachers moving forward teaching their content and special education teachers moving onward with the same students.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter presents the conclusions and recommendations of this qualitative study. Employing phenomenology as the research method, this study focused on secondary social studies teachers' perceptions of special education. Interviews were employed to gather data from the five secondary social studies teachers who participated in this study. The general question that guided this qualitative research study was, What is a secondary social studies teacher's perception of special education? Providing an introduction to the changing laws in special education that directly affected secondary social studies teachers, Chapter I also included the purpose and significance of this study, the research questions, and definitions of terminology. Embodied in the literature review, Chapter II was a thorough examination of the historical changes in special education coupled with implications for all educators. Qualitative research, phenomenology, and Moustakas' method of analysis were discussed in Chapter III. Chapter IV highlighted the two textural and three structural themes as evidenced in the findings and discussion. This final chapter is organized by conclusions and recommendations.

Conclusions

In regards to special education, the changes throughout history have affected the responsibilities of the general education teacher and forced them to take a more active role in the education of a student on an Individual Education Plan (IEP). In addition to

these changes, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requires a school culture of collaboration between general and special education teachers (Mastropieri & Scruggs, 2014). Dettmer et al. (2013) describe characteristics of an inclusive educational collaborative environment:

Every inclusive school looks different, but all inclusive schools are characterized by a sense of community, high standards, collaboration and cooperation, changing roles and an array of services, partnership with families, flexible learning environments, strategies based on research, new forms of accountability, and ongoing professional development. (p. 22)

The overall essence of this study revealed that the participants did not see themselves as a part of special education's processes; rather, they described a hands-off approach towards the development and implementation of IEPs. These responsibilities were for the special education teacher. These perceptions affected collaboration and cooperation between general and special education departments.

The overarching question that guided this qualitative research study was, What is a secondary social studies teacher's perception of special education? The overarching question was supported by the following sub-questions:

1. Does the secondary social studies teacher's educational background impact his or her perceptions of special education?
2. What are the secondary social studies teachers' perceptions of IEPs?
3. Do the secondary social studies teachers' perceptions impact IEP implementation? And, if so, how?

4. Do these perceptions impact the collaboration between secondary and special education teachers? And, if so, how?

Overarching Research Question: Perceptions of Special Education

The participants of this study were aware of the role of special education in their school systems. They also understood that the special education laws require students with disabilities to be placed in their classroom, the importance and impact of inclusive environments. However, with the increase of students on IEPs being educated in their classrooms, it did not mean that the general educators fully embraced the idea of inclusion (Swain, Nordness, & Leader-Janssen, 2012).

Collaboration between secondary social studies participants and special education teachers was described similarly amongst four of the participants teaching in the high school setting. They also appreciated the work that the special education teacher and paraprofessionals did on a daily basis. The collaboration between special education teachers and the secondary social studies teachers was very limited. Mark, Bob, Tim, and James all described collaboration in terms of “department” and the special education teachers could be called upon to help solve problems, “teach their student,” and discuss possible modifications that could be implemented by the special education teacher. Their overall perceptions were defined by the responsibility of subject and department. The participants believed that the responsibilities of educating students with disabilities was with the special education teacher.

Even though, there was a general appreciation for special education by the secondary social studies teachers and collaboration in the classroom was more often described through their work with the paraprofessionals who were placed in the

classroom to teach the students on IEPs. Moreover, the specifics of what the paraprofessional does in the classroom are discussed between the secondary social studies teacher and the paraprofessional. The modifications are communicated to the special education teacher either by the paraprofessional or the secondary social studies teacher depending upon the situation. Again, the perception is based upon the proximity of the paraprofessional in the classroom on a daily basis versus the special education teacher. The collaborative connection between the special education teacher and the secondary social studies teacher is often through the paraprofessional.

Ann's perception of special education was influenced by the middle school team approach. Ann viewed collaboration as natural and part of her teaching day. Bob, James, Mark, and Tim described a relationship of appreciation for the special education teacher and paraprofessional and "what they can do"; however, it was only a necessary relationship rather than the team concept. In contrast, Ann's comfort level with the special education teacher was prominent in her interview statements of "it just happens," "we work together," and "I can count on my specialist." In the middle school setting, the collaboration between Ann and her team's special education teacher was perceived as a collaborative relationship. Ann's interview statements supported how this positively affected her work with all students, including those on an IEP. Chu (2011) stated, "The way teachers perceive a student can greatly influence his/her academic performance and behavior in school" (p. 3).

Overall, it can be concluded that the participants, specifically those who taught at the high school level, had concerns about inclusion, least restrictive environment, and questions regarding fairness to other students. However, collaboration was the key

perception. While collaboration is necessary and the social studies teachers viewed it as critical, the parallel tracks of special education and secondary social studies have not merged at the secondary level but more so at the middle school.

Research Question One: Educational Background

The undergraduate teacher education programs that prepared each of the participants, with the exception of one, in the field all required one special education course. The participants stated that taking one course did not prepare them to teach students with disabilities and affected their perceptions of special education; it gave them each a false sense of responsibility in regards to the student on the IEP. “As the number of students educated in inclusive settings has increased over the past decade, many educators have reported serious reservations about their ability to support the inclusive placement of students with disabilities in their classrooms” (Swain et al., 2012, p. 76).

Tim’s educational background included both a social studies and special education degree. Even though he had experience in both areas, he made it very clear that he wanted to focus only on social studies and special education could do “their job.” Tim felt that his educational background and experience aided him in many ways when working with students on an IEP and he felt that his master’s degree in special education adequately prepared him to educate all types of learners. However, Mark, James, and Ann made it clear that although they had one university special education course and Bob did not have any special education preparation, all described learning about special education and making modifications as part of their “on the job” training.

Mark, James, Tim, and Ann described their special education courses while attaining their undergraduate degree in social studies as minimal. It is possible to

conclude that their university experience did not prepare them for the expectations of collaborating with special education teachers or the expectations of teaching students on an IEP. They described feeling prepared to teach social studies and were knowledgeable about their subject, but not necessarily ready to collaborate with other departments. Although research discusses the importance of collaboration, the participants were unprepared for this portion of their job. As reiterated by Davis et al. (2012),

one of the biggest struggles for students with disabilities meeting state proficiency levels...has been with blending the services of general and special education to guarantee that students with disabilities successfully progress in the general education setting at the same rate as their peers. (p. 209)

Research Question Two: Perceptions of the Individual Education Plan

In regards to the Individual Education Plan, the overall participant perception was that it was not their primary concern or responsibility. Each participant confirmed their understanding of the modifications, but their descriptors of the document did not mirror the intentions of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act as described by Jones (2012),

because the Individuals With Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004...makes it clear that the individualized education program (IEP) is not the exclusive responsibility of the special educator and the successful inclusion of students with disabilities depends upon the active involvement of general educators in the IEP process. (p. 297)

The IDEA emphasizes the importance of collaboration between the general and special education teacher in regards to the IEP document. As highlighted by King-Sears and Bowman-Kruhm (2011), “content on IEPs includes information that directly relates to promoting the success of students with disabilities in general education curricula” (p. 172). The participants only viewed the modifications portion of the document as important to their teaching. The accommodations that pertained to the environment were viewed as “easy fixes” by the secondary social studies teacher; modifications that pertained to coursework were considered to be the responsibility of the special education teacher or paraprofessional working with the student.

Research Question Three: IEP Implementation

Reflected upon by each participant, their lack of expertise in special education was considered a barrier for implementing special education related duties such as modifications. The participants’ reflections of inadequacies, lack of time, and not viewing this as their responsibility or area of expertise were most often stated as barriers for implementing content modifications. “*Role ambiguity* occurs when teachers find that they are unable to fulfill their responsibilities because of insufficient information” (Washburn-Moses, 2005, p. 152). It can be concluded that the overall perceptions of the participants in this study, and supported by the literature, believed that modifications for students with disabilities are the responsibility of the special education teacher (Corso, Bundick, Quaglia, & Haywood, 2013; Keefe & Moore, 2004; Obiakor et al., 2012). As aligned with the research findings, participants stated that they know their content and special educators have their area of expertise. The secondary social studies teachers’ overall perception of the IEP document itself affected the implementation of the

document. It was assumed by the secondary social studies teachers that the special educator or paraprofessional would be the individual to follow through with the curriculum modifications.

Research Question Four: Collaboration

Collaboration and communication permeated throughout all interviews with the participants. Whether it was plentiful or lacking, collaboration and communication was the basis of IEP meetings, the development of the IEP, student placement, modifications, and the sharing of content expertise. Dettmer et al. (2013) stated, “A supportive, communicative relationship among special education teachers, general classroom teachers, students, and their families is critical to the success of children with exceptional learning needs in inclusive classrooms” (p. 187). As was evident through Ann’s middle school model, good communication and collaboration promoted productive and fluid support in the classroom for the students and secondary social studies teachers.

The high school model revealed limited communication and collaboration. The secondary social studies and special education teachers’ ability to communicate permeated the perception of special education. Communication takes time and time was a difficult commodity to be found, resulting in a dependence on special education to take care of the students on their own and secondary to do the same for “their students.” The overall perception was that special education is necessary and so are the social studies. For the social studies teacher, their view of special education is that of separate working entities on a parallel track. Each are striving to complete similar tasks while educating students to the best of their abilities.

Recommendations

From the conclusions derived from the research, five themes, two textural themes (i.e., expertise and communication) and the three structural themes (i.e., placement, IEP Document-Reader's Digest Version, and time), support three overarching recommendations. The first recommendation focuses on higher education and preparing all pre-service teachers for teaching in inclusive environments. The second recommendation focuses on scheduled collaboration in the public school system. Scheduled collaboration would allow for ongoing team building among departments, which could lead to better collegial support in teaching students on IEPs. The third recommendation focuses on continued research in the area of teacher collaboration

Higher Education

There is an obvious disconnect as participants unanimously stated that their undergraduate educational program of study did not prepare them for the rigors and requirements of teaching students with disabilities. However, all the participants felt that their university programs prepared them to be proficient in teaching social studies. Universally, the participants all stated that the requirement of one special education course in their undergraduate program did not prepare them for the responsibilities of teaching students on an Individual Education Plan.

The research supports a recommendation for change at the higher education level. There should be more emphasis on special education beyond the one required special education course. "Many researchers agree that the major responsibility for changing teacher attitudes and skills about inclusion and collaboration rests with teacher-preparation programs" (Conderman & Johnston-Rogriguez, 2009, p. 236). Two

universities were represented among the five participants with each university requiring only one special education course. From their educational programs of study, courses taken included Special Needs in an Inclusive Environment and Inclusive Strategies.

Of note, the University of Syracuse is the only university program in the United States to offer an undergraduate degree that encompasses teacher education and special education degrees together. “There is a clear and explicit expectation in every class, regardless of the content area, that our preservice teachers are responsible for teaching all students, regardless of ability or disability” (Ashby, 2012, p. 89). It may not be realistic for every university to completely change programming and require all students to double major; however, creating a specialization focusing on special education may be more manageable.

A specialization could consist of courses encompassing topics that give educators a solid basis of special education. Throughout this study, the participants and research pointed to specific topics that would be relevant for all secondary social studies teachers to be better prepared to educate all students. These included learning disabilities, autism, inclusion, and differentiated instruction. The researcher envisions a special education specialization or minor that encompasses courses that cover the characteristics and teaching methods for topics such as Learning Disabilities, Autism, emotional disturbance, and intellectual disabilities. Throughout these courses, collaboration, communication, and problem based learning should be interwoven. This will help to better prepare the future educator for these practices. A practicum would require students to work alongside a special education teacher and hands on with a student on an IEP. The practicum experience would allow for practice in differentiating the instruction for the student in a

general education classroom and an opportunity to work in an inclusive environment. As stated by Swain et al. (2012),

given that the ultimate goal of inclusion is to create schools with prepared teachers that recognize all students have a right to participate in all aspects of the school community environment, teacher training institutions must provide the education necessary for effective implementation of inclusionary practices. (p. 75)

A special education specialization of this nature could then carry over into the teacher candidate's career and they would be better prepared to collaborate with special educators.

The educational laws in place for special education place high expectations on secondary social studies teachers. The participants referred to "learning on the job" as the largest portion of their awareness and understanding about special education. Experiences that enhanced participants' learning were the placement of students on IEPs in their classrooms, which added the responsibilities of implementing modifications, reviewing IEPs, and attending IEP meetings. Each participant discussed feeling inadequate initially and, through teaching experience and further education, they had a better "handle" on working with a student on an IEP and their special education teacher.

According to Mastropieri and Scruggs (2014), "approximately 4.0% of all school-age children are classified as having learning disabilities..., or 44.6% of the children requiring special education services in the schools" (p. 55). This large percentage ensures that all secondary social studies teachers will work with a student diagnosed with a learning disability, suggesting the need for a required course focused only on learning disabilities. The other disability category discussed by each participant

was autism. The participants expressed concern about the growing student population diagnosed with autism and were all perplexed by the complexity of possible needs of this student. All participants discussed the tremendous overwhelming feelings of learning how to work in an inclusive environment and ensuring that the content was differentiated to meet the needs of all students.

Scheduled Communication and Collaboration

At the secondary level, the participants described their discipline of social studies as a department and in the middle school as a team. Departments according to disciplines represented the organization of the high school. This was evident throughout the interview process with terms such as “the math people,” “English,” or “the other departments.” This also resonated when the participants described special education as “another department.” The overall perception of the participants was that they will work with special educators as necessary; however, the secondary social studies teachers’ focus and responsibility was to teach their content. The “separate department” philosophy created a natural barrier between secondary social studies teachers and special education teachers.

The division amongst departments, specifically social studies and special education, could be reduced through collaboration. The collaboration between the secondary social studies teacher and the special education teacher supported this essence of division with statements such as “they can do it,” “they know the student,” “I will ask them and they will do it,” “I can but would rather special education take care of it.” At the middle school, Ann was the only participant who did not view the special education department as a separate entity, but as a part of the team. This is a direct result of the

philosophy practiced at Ann's middle school, the team approach. The perception that each individual is only responsible for their content area makes collaboration difficult. As a result of this research, it is recommended that special education and social studies teachers establish consistently scheduled meetings for interdepartmental collaboration. Not limited to just social studies, opening up communication between departments outside of the classroom would allow deeper conversations to materialize and produce collaboration between departments.

Chenoweth (2015) suggests building personal relationships, "so that students trust teachers and so that parents, teachers, and administrators trust one another" (p. 17). Collaborating and discussing the content in relation to the student's abilities and needs can further each educator's understanding of one another's role. "Collaborate on how to teach that content by unpacking standards, mapping curriculum, designing lessons, and constructing assessments" (Chenoweth, 2015, p. 17). Overall, there is a need for educators to be trained in both special education and the social sciences; each individual is able to bring their knowledge to the classroom to enhance the education of all students, including those on an IEP. The IDEA set this precedent: "The reauthorization emphasized having high expectations for students with disabilities and ensuring their access to the general education curriculum in the regular classroom—to the maximum extent possible—to meet developmental goals" (Conderman & Johnston-Rodriguez, 2009, p. 235).

This recommendation is quite realistic, as the participants discussed having a similar free period each day set aside for Professional Learning Community (PLC) meetings, IEP meetings, department meetings, and prep. The flexible period was open for

the most part, except when there were scheduled monthly meetings or IEP meetings. Gebbie, Ceglowski, Taylor, and Miels (2012) discuss the importance of professional development: “Professional development for teachers has been one of the primary ways of enhancing practice” (p. 36). Implementing a monthly meeting between the secondary social studies teacher and the special education teacher(s) could enhance collaboration between departments. Designing the schedule to discuss students, needs, new ideas, ideas for modifications, or differentiating the instruction could prove to be valuable for both educators and, in the end, enhance the “shared” student’s ability to learn.

Future Research

The third recommendation is for continued research in the area of teacher collaboration, specifically between special education and secondary social studies education. A solid collaborative relationship is beneficial for all educators (Lingo et al., 2011). The need for continued research in the area of inclusive environments and collaborative teaching could aid in strengthening the relationship between social studies teachers and special education. The collaborative efforts of both general and special educators is needed to support inclusive environments (Jones, 2012). This research supports the need for further studies to be conducted to continue building support for cohesive teaching models for the benefits of all students’ educational needs.

APPENDICES

Appendix A
Institutional Review Board Informed Consent

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

TITLE: Secondary Social Studies Teacher's Perception of Special Education
PROJECT DIRECTOR: Kelli Odden
PHONE # [REDACTED]
DEPARTMENT: Teaching & Learning

STATEMENT OF RESEARCH

A person who is to participate in the research must give his or her informed consent to such participation. This consent must be based on an understanding of the nature and risks of the research. This document provides information that is important for this understanding. Research projects include only subjects who choose to take part. Please take your time in making your decision as to whether to participate. If you have questions at any time, please ask.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY?

You are invited to be in a research study about social studies teacher's perceptions of special education because you are a secondary social studies teacher. The purpose of this research study is to further study a social studies teacher's perception of special education. The study will focus on teachers only. The research will consist of 2 interviews of secondary social studies teachers. The research objectives are to examine:

- * The attitudinal impact of the secondary social studies teacher on the implementation of an IEP in the secondary social studies classroom.
- * Identify if there are barriers for implementing the IEP in classroom instruction.

HOW MANY PEOPLE WILL PARTICIPATE?

Approximately 8-10 people will take part in this study at the University of North Dakota.

HOW LONG WILL I BE IN THIS STUDY?

Your participation in the study will last 4-6 weeks. You will need to meet at a location of your choosing 2 separate times. Each visit will take about 90 minutes/1 ½ hours.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN DURING THIS STUDY?

If you chose to participate, you will be contacted via email to set up the first interview at your convenience. The second interview date and time will be decided at the completion of the first interview. The interview will last approximately 90 minutes and be audio-recorded. You are free

Approval Date:	SEP 5 2014
Expiration Date:	SEP 4 2015
[REDACTED] IRB	

not to answer any question during the interview. The audio recordings will be transcribed and returned to you to ensure accuracy of the written document. No personal identification is used on any written document and all descriptions of persons will be listed as Secondary Social Studies Teacher (7-12). The location will be listed as a school in the upper Midwest.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS OF THE STUDY?

There are no foreseeable risks to participating in this study.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF THIS STUDY?

You may not benefit personally from being in this study. However, in the future, other people might benefit from this study. Information gathered from this study could aide in creating professional development for educators.

WILL IT COST ME ANYTHING TO BE IN THIS STUDY?

You will not have any costs for being in this research study.

WILL I BE PAID FOR PARTICIPATING?

You will not be paid for your participation in this research study.

WHO IS FUNDING THE STUDY?

████████████████████ and the research team are receiving no payments from other agencies, organizations, or companies to conduct this research study.

CONFIDENTIALITY

The records of this study will be kept private to the extent permitted by law. In any report about this study that might be published, you will not be identified. Your study record may be reviewed by Government agencies, the ██████ Research Development and Compliance office, and the ██████ Institutional Review Board.

Any information that is obtained in this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law.

Confidentiality will be maintained with anonymous transcripts of all interviews, participants will only be referred to as secondary social studies teachers (7-12). You have the right to review and edit all transcripts. Consent forms will be kept in a locked and secure location with only Kelli

Approval Date:	SEP 5 2014
Expiration Date:	SEP 4 2015
████████████████████	IRB

[REDACTED]

Odden having access to the consent forms and personal data. Upon completion of the study all audio files will be destroyed.

If there is a written report or article about this study, I will describe the study results in a summarized manner so that you cannot be identified.

IS THIS STUDY VOLUNTARY?

Your participation is voluntary. You may choose not to participate or you may discontinue your participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with the University of North Dakota.

If you decide to leave the study early, we ask that you inform Kelli Odden that you would like to withdraw.

CONTACTS AND QUESTIONS?

The researcher conducting this study is Kelli Odden. You may ask any questions you have now. If you later have questions, concerns, or complaints about the research please contact Kelli Odden day or night at 701-430-1170. My advisor for this project is Dr. Donna Pearson and she can be reached at 701-777-2861 during the day.

If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, you may contact The University of North Dakota Institutional Review Board at (701) 777-4279.

- You may also call this number about any problems, complaints, or concerns you have about this research study.
- You may also call this number if you cannot reach research staff, or you wish to talk with someone who is independent of the research team.
- General information about being a research subject can be found by clicking “Information for Research Participants” on the web site:
<http://und.edu/research/resources/human-subjects/research-participants.cfm>

[If applicable] I give consent to be audiotaped during this study.

Please initial: ☐ Yes ☐ No

[If applicable] I give consent to be videotaped during this study.

Please initial: ☐ Yes ☐ No

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[If applicable] I give consent to be photographed during this study.

Please initial: ☐ Yes ☐ No

[If applicable] I give consent for my quotes to be used in the research; however I will not be identified.

Please initial: ☐ Yes ☐ No

Your signature indicates that this research study has been explained to you, that your questions have been answered, and that you agree to take part in this study. You will receive a copy of this form.

Subjects Name: _____

Signature of Subject

Date

I have discussed the above points with the subject or, where appropriate, with the subject's legally authorized representative.

Signature of Person Who Obtained Consent

Date

Approval Date:	SEP 5 2014
Expiration Date:	SEP 4 2015
[REDACTED] IRB	

Appendix B

Request to Conduct Research in the Public Schools

Request to Conduct Research in the [REDACTED]

Date: August 28, 2014	Name: Kelli Odden	Phone: 701-430-1170
Fax or Email: [REDACTED]		Research Advisor: Dr. Donna Pearson
Address: [REDACTED]		College or Dept.: [REDACTED] in the Department of Teaching & Learning
Research Title: Secondary Social Studies Teacher's Perception of Special Education		
<p>Give a brief description of your research. Attach additional papers if necessary. Please attach sample copies of assessment instrument, tests, or communications to be used:</p> <p>I am a Doctoral Candidate, working towards attaining an Ed.D. in Teaching and Learning.</p> <p>The purpose of this research is to describe the impact of a social studies teacher's perception of special education. The study will focus on teachers only. The research will consist of 2 interviews of secondary social studies teachers.</p> <p>The research objectives are to examine:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Identify social studies teacher perceptions of IEP's, and if this creates barriers for implementing the IEP in classroom instruction. * The impact of social studies teacher's perceptions of special education on collaboration between special and general education teachers. <p>Individuals will be interviewed and the interviews will be audio recorded and transcribed. Each interviewee will be interviewed two times (90 minutes each) for a total of 180 minutes. There will not be any personal indicators of the interviewee during the interview or in the transcription. The interviewee will fall under the category of secondary social studies teacher (7-12).</p> <p>The communication that will be used is interviewing, each interview will begin with a brief scenario. One scenario discussing the beginning of the school year and understanding the needs of all students and the second discussing parent/teacher preparation. The questions that have been developed to begin the interview process revolve around the two scenarios to begin the conversations:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Describe your involvement with special education. 2. What does collaboration look like in your classroom? 3. When hearing the term IEP, what does this mean to you? 4. What is your process when reading an IEP, what information are you looking for? 5. Tell me about a time when you read student IEPs. 6. What was it like for you when you read the accommodations listed in the IEPs of students in your 		

<p>classroom?</p> <p>Upon approval from the district, I planned to contact teachers via email, requesting their participation in my study.</p> <p>This study may benefit school districts in the area of professional development, specifically focusing on meeting the diverse needs of all types of learners in the classroom. Understanding perceptions of teachers towards special education.</p>		
<p>Number of students needed for research:</p> <p>zero</p>	<p>Number of teachers needed for research:</p> <p>8-10 social studies teachers (7-12) With 3 or more years of experience and have or had students on an IEP in their classroom.</p>	<p>Grade Level or Dept.:</p> <p>Social Studies 7-12</p>
<p>What schools are you interested in conducting the research in?</p> <p>I would like to contact social studies teachers that teach in 7-12 throughout the entire district, middle and high school. I would conduct interviews at the convenience of the teacher at a location that is comfortable for them.</p>		
<p>Will confidential records be required? (If yes, indicate type.)</p> <p>No.</p>		<p>Length of time required to complete the research:</p> <p>I am requesting 2 interview times for each teacher for a total of 180 minutes. These interviews will be spread over a 4-6 week period.</p>

To be completed by School District Official:

<p>Approved:</p>		<p>Not Approved:</p>	
<p>Assistant Superintendent Signature</p>		<p>Date: 8-29-14</p>	
<p>Approved to conduct research in the following schools: Any MS/HS</p>			

Send completed form to: [Redacted]
Attn: Assistant Superintendent's Office

Appendix C
E-Mail Advertisement

Email Sent to all possible participants

Hello,

I am a doctoral candidate at the [REDACTED] and am working towards the completion of my dissertation. The dissertation is answering the question: What is a secondary social studies teacher's perception of special education? This question will be answered through two separate 90-minute interviews with a secondary social studies teacher that has taught for at least three years and has or has had students on an Individual Education Plan in their courses. I would like to know if you would be interested in participating in this research study. You are under no obligation to participate, and if you choose to participate, you can withdraw at any time. I have attached a consent form to this email and am available to answer any questions you may have about participating in this research. You can contact me via email at [REDACTED] or via telephone [REDACTED] with question and/or with a statement that you would be interested in participating. Thank You for your time.

Thank You,

Kelli

Kelli Odden



Appendix D

Scenario 1 and Questions

Dissertation Scenario (first interview)

Ms. Gabriel is a high school history teacher. She will have four students with disabilities in her fifth period U.S. history class. She will have John diagnosed with Autism, Sue diagnosed with a learning disability in the area of reading comprehension, Sam who is paralyzed from the waist down and in a wheel chair, and Sally who has been diagnosed with Down Syndrome. The special education teacher, Mr. Colbert, reviewed the IEPs with Ms. Gabriel so she could see what kinds of accommodations she is required to make in her teaching.

Experience

1. How does this scenario strike you?
2. How do you get information about students?

Communication

3. What forms of communication do you find beneficial?

Special Education Protocols

4. How do you like to go through IEPs?
5. What types of accommodations have you implemented in your classes?

Individual Education Plan (IEP)

6. When hearing the term IEP, what does this mean to you?
7. Tell me about a time when you read a student IEPs.

Scenario adapted from Friend, M., & Bursuck, W. (2009). *Including students with special needs* (5th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson.

Appendix E

Scenario 2 and Questions

Dissertation Scenario (second interview)

Ms. Gabriel is a high school history teacher. She is preparing for the first parent teacher conferences of the year. She is preparing information for each of her students that attend her U.S. history class including John diagnosed with Autism, Sue diagnosed with a learning disability in the area of reading comprehension, Sam who is paralyzed from the waist down and in a wheel chair, and Sally who has been diagnosed with Down Syndrome.

Experience

1. How does this scenario strike you?
2. How do you prepare for parent teacher conferences?

Communication

3. What forms of communication do you find beneficial?

Preparation

4. What methods do you use to prepare for students on an IEP?
5. What types of collaborative practices are implemented between the secondary teacher and special education teacher?

Scenario adapted from Friend, M., & Bursuck, W. (2009). *Including students with special needs* (5th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson.

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